

SUBJECTIVITY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF NON-PLACES

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Öznellik ve Yer-Olmayan Yerlerin Deneyimi

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Thesis Abstract

Ayşe Boren, “Subjectivity and the Experience of Non-Places”

This thesis aims to explore the mode of subjective experience historically peculiar to the post-industrial world through analyzing the role played by non-places in transforming the individual from the producer of her own experience to the effect of a production process that denies her any agency. The thesis proceeds from the assumption that the organization of space has major consequences for subjective experience. Subjective experience is studied as a mode of relating to the world and to oneself through the mediation of various discourses, and actions. As forces such as industrialization, urbanization, and modern apparatuses of power become dominant factors in the shaping of the everyday life the subject yields her agency and turns into the mere function of an automated experience that has been constituted outside her. The mode of the relationship she forms with things, others, and her self becomes determined by these objective forces and the abstract forms they propose as mediators. In order to trace this abstraction of experience in space a distinction is drawn between the “historical space” of early modernity and the “abstract space of” the post-industrial world, which is defined by the balance of power between the “representations of space” and “representational spaces”. In the course of time, “representations of space” that refer to the dominant conception of space gain priority over the representational spaces that correspond to lived space. Consequently lived space and the spatial experience it generates become subject to the rules of conceived space. Non-places are presented as the extreme, but still exemplary, cases of abstract space. These places are characterized by the subjection of time to the rules of a repetitive and homogeneous space and the consequent hegemony of a frozen moment, by fixed identities that arise out of the annihilation of the interrelationship between the subject and the object, and the individual and the community. A theoretical study of the impact of such a mode of relating to the world on subjective experience is carried out.

Tez Özeti

Ayşe Boren, “Öznellik ve Yer-Olmayan-Yerlerin Deneyimi”

Bu tez, bireyin kendi deneyiminin üreticisi olmaktan çıkıp kendisi dışında işleyen bir üretim sürecinin aksi haline gelmesinde yer-olmayan yerlerin oynadığı rolü inceleyerek tarihsel olarak post-endüstriyel dünyaya özgü öznel deneyim biçimini araştırmayı amaçlar. Mekansal örgütlenmenin öznel deneyim üzerinde belirleyici sonuçları olduğu varsayımından ilerler. Öznel deneyim, çeşitli söylemler ve eylemler aracılığı ile kişinin dünyayla ve kendisiyle kurduğu ilişki biçimi olarak ele alınmıştır. Endüstrileşme, kentleşme, ve modern iktidar aygıtları gibi güçler gündelik hayatı şekillendirmekte baskın faktörler haline geldikçe kişi etkinliğini kaybeder ve kendisi dışında oluşturulmuş, otomatikleştirilmiş bir deneyimin salt işlevi haline gelir. Şeylerle, ötekilerle ve kendisiyle kurduğu ilişki biçimi yukarıda sözü edilen nesnel güçler ve aracı olarak önerdikleri soyut formlar tarafından belirlenmeye başlar. Deneyimin soyutlaşma sürecini mekan üzerinden izlemek amacıyla erken modernitenin “tarihi mekan”ı ile post-endüstriyel dünyanın “soyut mekan”ı arasında bir ayrım çizilmiştir. Bu ayrım, “mekan temsilleri” ile “temsili mekanlar” arasındaki güç dengesine dayanmaktadır. Zaman içinde, belirli bir dönemin baskın mekan tasavvurlarına atıfta bulunan “mekan temsilleri” yaşanan makana tekabül eden “temsili mekanlar” üzerinde bir üstünlük elde eder. Sonuç olarak, yaşanan mekan ve bu mekanın yarattığı mekansal deneyim tasavvur edilmiş mekanın kurallarına tabi kılınır. Yer-olamayan yerler, soyut mekanın uç ama yine de örnek teşkil edici durumları olarak sunulmaktadır. Bu yerler, zamanın kendini tekrarlayan ve türdeş bir mekanın kurallarına tabi kılınması ve, bunun bir sonucu olarak, donmuş bir anın egemenliği, ve özne ile nesne, birey ile kamu arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkinin yok edilmesinin ürünü olan sabitlenmiş kimlikler tarafından nitelendirilmektedir. Dünyayla kurulan bu tür bir ilişkinin öznel deneyim üzerindeki etkisi üzerine teorik bir çalışma yürütülmüştür.

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INTRODUCTION

My objective in this thesis is to analyze the role non-places play in the transformation of subjects from participants in the constitution of their own experience to the objects of an experience that has been constituted outside them through the interplay of the social structures. Non-places are those transit zones such as the airports, highways, shopping malls, and refugee camps that are symbolically situated in opposition to “anthropological places” which are defined by Augé as “places of identity, of relations, and of history”¹. With this definition of anthropological places I would agree; however, I would refrain from describing non-places in totally negative terms as destroying all forms of relations and bonds. Rather than completely disposing of the existing structures – either modern or traditional – they dismantle them; detaching practices, historical and natural elements, signs, and images from their present contexts in order to infuse them with different meanings that will give rise to new signification systems which will determine the relationships of individuals with themselves, others, and history.

On the other hand, I would argue that the constant disruption of identity that arises out of the condition of being a passenger, and intensified through the accompanying flow of information, is not the final aim of these places but a means for forming a new mode of experience and subjectivity. Neither the

¹ Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 52.

subject nor its experience is discarded; but they are rearticulated along the lines of an abstract logic that borrows its terms from various practices and discourses such as law, commerce, institutional mechanisms of power, and technologically informed science. It is this new mode of experience and its subject that I want to analyze without either detaching non-places from their historical context or disregarding their particularity.

Every social space provides its users specific representations that are embedded in the organization of space in the form of the structure of buildings and streets, in the way the city is demarcated into different parts and the various relationships formed between these parts, in the form of the dominant mode of transportation that is used, and through the distribution of markets, work, leisure and residing places, and symbols within the city. My intention in presenting all these urban relations as exhibiting specific representations of space is not to deny the material reality of space but to argue that the representations of space are neither the byproducts of a space that has been produced without their intervention nor are they attached to space after it has been constructed; but that they operate in the production process of space as one of the forces of production; that any social space is always already infused with a group of representations.

The initial residing place of representations is the realm of thought; or rather, they are the products of a thought which has arisen out of the interplay between dominant modes of discourse and power relations; but they usually tend towards hiding the operations and implications of this thought rather than rendering it transparent. Consequently, any thought of, about, or even in space must inevitably proceed via these representations. This spatial thought needs

not to be a conscious one – in the sense that there does not exist a consciousness that constantly traces its own movements – rather it may, and usually does, surface from within daily practices, right in those actions that the inhabitant performs “without thinking”, since the thought she performs is always already given to her through the organization of space. Respectively, to think oneself within a space entails the replacement of oneself in the plane of representations and consequently to recognize oneself within this conceived space as its subject; this is a “misrecognition” in the sense that the subject comprehends herself as the source of what in actuality she is an effect.

Since the ways of conceiving space have consequences for the way space is practiced, transformations in representations inevitably influence the way people recognize and codify their own selves and actions, together with their relationship with objects and others in space. Meaning that, material and symbolic attributes of space, which are the harbinger of a specific form of thought, transform the modality of experience and its subject. Consequently, in modernity the conscious reconstruction of space so as to reshape the nature of experience emerges as a very effective tool of power.

In arguing that the discovery of the close relationship between the organization of space and the mode of experience is particularly a modern one I do not intend to dismiss pre-modern societies and forms of power as totally uninformed about the role of space in social formation. Rather, I am suggesting that the awareness of such a relationship can be turned into an effective tool only under certain material conditions. Only the societies which have undergone urbanization and industrialization and consequently realized the extent of changes that can be affected on space through human intervention can

mobilize the planning of space as a dominant apparatus of power. That is, only a culture which has succeeded in breaking down the organic bond between people and the soil to a large extent can rearticulate this relationship along abstract terms and succeed in reshaping the inhabitants' ways of seeing and thinking.

Hence the ideology of the nation-state represents space as a homogeneous entity that is indiscriminate in all its operations towards different regions and cities within its boundaries which are presented to be the products of actual wars rather than the negotiations and contracts that take place after the fact, and which are consequently made the objects of various narratives that endow them with a quasi-sacred quality. And this representation is actualized in space to a certain extent through the construction of national networks of transportation and communication. Eventually, through her daily practices the subject comes to realize herself as the citizen of the nation-state. Moreover, such a conditioning of space, its planned qualification, is in no way an act restricted to state power. Indeed, any formation that strives to establish itself as a locus of power has to undertake the production of a new space. Thus commerce constructs space as an empty medium in which commodities circulate freely – displayed in all their beauty and alleged transparency from the shop windows – and at the same time configures space thoroughly according to the law of the commodity.

In any case, what is at stake is a form of power that has gained maximum – but never total – control over the bedrocks of existence and experience (space and time) and thus can function very smoothly at the level of everyday life. Therefore, we can no longer imagine the contingent flow of daily

life to be the source of the structure of space. Rather, it is the other way around: In the contemporary world, the organization of space in accordance with abstract rules is what shapes the realm of the quotidian. Non-places can be located within this context as the sites in which a multitude of representations – those of the nation-state, commerce, transnational economy, law, etc. – are superimposed on top of each other and perfected with high technology which presents these places as the neutral sites of pure functionality. As such they cannot be perceived as displaying the exceptional cases of an otherwise completely different condition; but rather, they should be seen as generating the extreme instances of an already more or less institutionalized tendency in the organization of life: Namely, the objectification of subjects and the externalization of experience.

Foucault defines experience as the “correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture.”² That is, in modernity experience cannot be thought as conditioned by subjects, or as the product of subjective intentions, thoughts, or behaviors; but rather, can only be conceived as something produced outside the subjects and productive of subjectivities. With social transformations such as the establishment of modern power relations, industrialization, and urbanization the subject slowly recedes from the sphere of experience as its owner and leaves its place to the interplay of discursive formations and power relations which then calls upon the subject to take up a position in relation to an experience that has been fabricated outside her. It is only after the fact that the self is obliged to enter into this abstract realm and reflect upon her self, to form

² Michel Foucault, *Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality V.2* (New York: Vintage, 1986), 4.

a relation with her self via the representations that has been produced within it, in order to posit herself as the subject of an experience.

Understood by Agamben “subjectivity is nothing other than the speaker’s capacity to posit him or herself as an ego, and cannot in any way be defined through some wordless sense of being oneself [...] but only through a linguistic I transcending any possible experience.”³ This does not mean that in modernity there are no longer any experiences, but it simply means that they are now realized outside the individual; that today it is not plausible to define the subject on the basis of a mode of experience in which the “subject and the object are produced through one another”⁴. On the contrary, today, the subject is a mere function/object of a discursive experience which has been formed outside her and any agency she claims is the effect of the position to which she has been temporarily attached. Such a transformation in the constitution of the subject and the mode of experience entails the loss of a “representational mode of relationship” formed with the world; by which I understand the potential on the part of the subject to appropriate the given representations, to push them to their limits in order to make them livable; that is, to render them *experientible*. But also the objectification of the thing, its being cut into a static role cut out by the dominant discourses which are authorized by power relations.

But such a mode of relationship with the world is only possible when experience is itself a thing of the everyday. Actually the “expropriation of experience”, its *a-humanization* begins with the re-contextualization of experience within science as a means to knowledge and as “displace[d] ... as

³ Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 52.

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Zur Metakritik* (Stuttgart, 1956), 146 quoted in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-50* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 70.

far as possible outside the individual: onto instruments and numbers”.⁵ Before this transportation experience was considered to be precious not because it served an end; but simply because it was what it was: The ability to render the world livable; and it took its authority not from certainty, not from a claim to exhibit the truth of a thing-in-itself; but precisely from its power to narrate things and relations without violating them.⁶ And narration does not so much entail the stripping bare of the things as covering them with a thin garment that, in the course of time, takes their form.

Consequently, the displacement of experience and its utilization within science for achieving certainty involves not only the violation of things, of the world; but also the fading away of the authority of the quotidian and its emergence as an amorphous flow that is in need of guidance from an external experience that is regarded to be superior to it. This violation simultaneously affects objects and subjects. The reification of things, their being fixed to an “essence”, a “nature” renders impossible on the part of the subject to get involved with them in a relationship of mutual deconstruction and reconstruction.

Such a process of abstraction that blocks the mutual relationship between the thing and the self, that objectifies both, is in no way peculiar to modern science; but observable in all aspects of modern life which aim to give shape to this so-called amorphous sphere, the quotidian; to introduce it with what it essentially lacks: That is, order, functionality, and truth. Thus while science replaces experience onto instruments and numbers in order to endow

⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 20.

⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 16.

life with truth, industrialization replaces it onto machines in order to transform experience into a means of profit and discipline, and urbanization presents itself as a huge mechanism which is made up of the intricate interplay between various discourses, documents of law and social policy, statistical surveys, contracts between companies, institutions, representations that tend to actualize themselves in space, but also machines that dissect the earth, that divide it into different parts with varying functions, which implement it with cables and so on. Consequently, the task of shaping the city life is completely abstracted from the flow of the everyday and displaced onto the all-encompassing domain called ‘urban planning’ which in the end entails the formalization of urban experience. “If”, in the pre-modern world, “the everyday life of labor and leisure gradually [...] gave shape to the structure of the city, modern urban planning had as its goal to allow the structure of the city to give shape to everyday life [...]”⁷

In this thesis, I want to study this abstraction at work in the organization of space and therefore I turn my attention to non-places which exhibit the perfect examples of this process of abstraction. I want to analyze the means by which the citizen, which is already an abstract category, is stripped off from its particularity and transformed into a mere function of an abstract space; how in this narration-less space of commerce, power, and their abstract rules representations, signs and images communicate to the subject from afar in order to draw him into an imaginary realm which completes the objectification process of the subject; rendering a representational mode of relationship with the world impossible.

⁷ Stefan Jonsson, “Neither Inside nor Outside: Subjectivity and the Spaces of Modernity in Robert Musil’s *The Man without Qualities*,” *New German Critique*, no. 68. (Spring-Summer, 1996): 37.

SPATIO-TEMPORAL PERCEPTION

Any locus of power that seeks to create effects in the sphere of everyday life has to be able to institutionalize itself through the production of a space of its own; a space through which it can both define itself in practical and symbolic terms and structure the inhabitants' relations with others, with themselves, and with the world, and their mode of existing in society. Through habituation of particular spaces the user internalizes the basic rules of the existing social order, which are materialized through the structure of the space and the practice it engenders and learns how to situate herself within the given context. Although, as Lefebvre suggests more than once in *The Production of Space*, the spatial practice born out of the organization of space is not exhaustive of the whole social practice, it plays a major role in the way people perceive their lives, behaviors, relations with others and themselves. Therefore, space occurs as one of the constituent elements of subjective experience and conversely, the agents of power have to be able to establish control over the construction and organization of space so that they can ascertain the maintenance of social practice and the order it engenders.

However, space is not the sole constituent element of subjective experience; in order for a particular order of space to be thoroughly effective in the way people experience their lives it has to be allied with a specific conceptualization of time. In order for the habituation of a space – the

orientation of the subject to the obstacles and the possibilities presented through space – to gain meaning it has to be represented by the individual (first of all to herself) through a more or less coherent narrative. What really defines a place is not so much what it consists of as the nature of the relationships constituted between things and people in and through that space. And this weaving together, this labor of forming a relational paradigm is accomplished by narrativity which requires a specific conception of time in order for the story to unfold. Synchronization and simultaneity; the linear or circular development of the story; or a kind of narrativity defined by suspensions and gaps in time; the longitude of durations; etc... These temporal aspects employed by narration impose a (temporal) form upon experience and; in that way, give rise to qualitative changes in the construction and conception of subjectivity.

Both space and time are indispensable elements of any form of representation and; although these two practices – the construction of space and the conceptualization of time – differ from each other, they reciprocally determine each other. What is brought forth through the ‘usage’ of a given space is rearticulated by the various time conceptions in use. And conversely, a specific mode of relation constituted with space allows the emergence of only a limited variety of time conceptualizations. In other words, the structuring of space functions as a major instrument in the organization and conceptualization of time.

The distinctions drawn between the sacred and the profane, the public and private do not only find their concrete form in space, but the space produced with these oppositions in mind also creates changes in the way

people perceive and spend their time. Although modernity affects demarcations in space that are unprecedented, Lefebvre traces back the constitution of oppositions and the creation of demarcations in space to the production of absolute space; which is the religious-political space inhabited by the sacred and the unworldly (i.e. gods and goddesses, death, etc.) and which is frequented only for the special occasions of rites and rituals. These spaces, as they are the loci of the absolute, and the infinite – albeit never in an immediate way – and as they clearly separate themselves from the practice of everyday, underline the “finiteness in which social practice occurs, in which the law that practice has established holds sway”. Absolute space constitutes the exteriority of the socio-political, so as to draw the boundaries of the social, to guarantee that “social space thus remains the space of the society, of social life”⁸. These special constructions exhibit a double stance in relation to nature: They partake of natural space, but they transform their dependence on nature into a symbolic negation of it. Absolute spaces are constructed as “full” – a divine fullness – in opposition to nature which is in turn projected as empty.

A resemblance can be detected between the organization of these religious zones and the construction of the City in opposition to the state of nature. Agamben argues that, chronologically no such phase as that of the “state of nature” really exists; but that it only emerges with the production of the City as a political zone. In other words, the City, as the locus of politics could not be founded without the fabrication of a so-called natural state that will always function as the threshold of order, a threshold that will be continuously referred to and systematically transgressed by the sovereign

⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 35.

power.⁹ In a similar fashion, absolute spaces are political acts in the sense that they borrow elements from nature – such as “age, sex, genitality” – and rearticulate these along the lines of a socio-political discourse. “At once civil and religious, absolute space thus preserved and incorporated bloodlines, family, unmediated relationships – but it transposed them to the city, to the political state founded on the town.”¹⁰ In contrast, nature turns out to be “empty” in the sense that it is deprived of religious symbols and political significance.

This practice of transportation and rearticulation through space also has affects on the perception of time. If the absolute spaces instituted a political order by way of their exceptional location within nature they also constituted a break in time. In nature time is embodied in space; everything in space “shows its age”. In nature birth, decadence and death exist together and, although we may not be able to calculate the age of every single natural thing, we know that all of them are the products of spatial changes with different histories – that is, they are the results of different durations. The agrarian production is almost totally dependent on this spatio-temporal order as it is the dawn and the dusk that determine the work hours and the seasons that determine which goods will be consumed and exchanged in a specific time of the year. Note that the agrarian society is one whose daily rhythm has not yet been interrupted by advanced technologies, and especially by those of transportation. It is the grand transformations inflicted upon space that endow a form to the flow of time and consequently reshape our daily experiences.

⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 105-6 quoted in Bülent Diken, “From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities: Biopolitics and the End of the City,” *Citizenship Studies* 8, no. 1 (March 2004): 88.

¹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 48.

The effects generated by absolute space may not be as decisive as those caused by accumulation and industrialization, but they prepare the background for the latter to establish themselves. It is not that with the production of absolute space the above-mentioned organic bond with space totally ceases; people continue to depend on the longitude of the days, the turn of the seasons, the weather conditions, and in relation with those, on what the soil provides them. However, with the advent of these special zones a second time conception emerges, one which exists simultaneously with the cyclical notion of time but which also negates it through the introduction of the idea of a time that exceeds the boundaries of natural space.

As gods and goddesses, together with the symbols they give rise to, are not affected by the passage of time, the places that contain them may be described as the worldly representatives of immortality. They are spatial constructions which insert a break in time through the introduction of a genuine time conception which does not yield to the laws of traditional time. And although the idea of immortality is an abstraction, once it is institutionalized through space it begins to form its own laws which have material consequences for the whole society. Above all, the production of absolute space constitutes one of the steps in the construction of a hierarchical social order. While those who have easier access to absolute space, who have more say in the constitution of the laws of this religious/political zone, thus those who are closer to the gods, occupy the higher ranks in this social order, those who have restricted access to and knowledge of those spaces constitute the lower levels of the society.

In this structure, the new time conception becomes a tool in the hands of the powerful for the control of those who occupy the lower ranks since it gradually gives way to the ideal of salvation in the next world – in that time-space that transcends the worldly one – which causes people to situate themselves towards another reality; the ideal of eternal happiness becomes influential in the organization of this life as people start to perceive their experiences in its light which is judgmental and of which the privileged classes become the mediators.

As I have mentioned above this initial demarcation in space is not the most radical one in terms of its socio-cultural consequences; however, it prepares the necessary background for fragmentations affected by modernization and industrialization to institutionalize themselves. According to Lefebvre, with modernization and industrialization the economic and political realms have gained primacy over the lived sphere and this has resulted in the subjugation of time (“that most precious element of lived experience”) to the laws of abstract space¹¹ – a space in which the abstract laws of both state power and transnational capital reign.

The importance of the problematic of space in the contemporary world is unquestionable. The incessant redrawing of the borders between nations, the problems introduced by globalization which seems to aim at total homogeneity through deepening the fragmentations (in space and life) created by industrialization and capitalist economy, the realization of “landed and human finiteness”¹² which is a result of the over-consumption of resources... All these instances, and others, show the vitality of the problems relating to space not

¹¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 95.

¹² Paul Virilio, *City of Panic* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005), 64.

just for the most powerful political agents, i.e. the state and the multinational corporations, but also for the unprivileged classes, who are trapped in the condition of a constant movement searching for a home. Yet even from this space-centric picture, time is not altogether absent. In the end time can never be annihilated; however, its subjugation to the space of power and capitalism gives rise to major changes in the nature of subjective experience.

The departure point for the history of space is not to be found in geographical descriptions of natural space, but rather in the study of natural rhythms, and of the modification of those rhythms and their inscription in space by means of human actions, especially work-related actions. It begins, then, with the spatio-temporal rhythms of nature as transformed by a social practice.¹³

Hence, it is the gradual development of applied sciences and technology that allow the appropriation of land and transform the identity of work, together with the construction of roads and vehicles (such as ships that can travel long distance) that bring about speed in transportation and enable the flourishing of trade, that the vitality of the given soil as the only source of life is diminished and the Western society reaches the point of producing the historical space which is “the space of accumulation (the accumulation of all wealth and resources: knowledge, technology, money, precious objects, works of art and symbols)”¹⁴. As the above argument by Lefebvre makes clear, these transformations brought upon space mainly through technical progress modify the rhythm of life, introducing the notion of speed. Speed, which had only a minor function in economies totally dependent on soil, turns into one of the major elements in the working of life, gradually replacing the time-demanding

¹³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 117.

¹⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 49.

activities with those that depend on the capabilities of technical tools to extract the most out of the land in the shortest time periods possible.

For all the exploitation and standardization it introduced, it may still be argued that historical space left a relatively broad margin for creativity, opening up new horizons and making possible to imagine what was hitherto unimaginable. However, the unrestricted flow of capital, goods, and symbols, together with the unprecedented progress reached in the realm of science and technology gradually leaves the way for abstract space which is first and foremost characterized by abstract labor and its socio-cultural implications. This space is defined by Lefebvre as the “dominant space of centers of power and wealth”¹⁵ which tries to abolish all the differences that may emerge from the periphery and whose main objective is homogenization; a space that is underlined by automation, “reproducibility,” and “repetition”.

In a manner that seems paradoxical in the first instance, this objective to homogenize is carried out through dissecting the place, dividing it into segments and attributing a different role to each one of them. These segments retain an appearance of difference, but in fact, all of them are subject to the same law. After all, starting with the production of absolute space, localization has proven itself to be one of the most efficient means for controlling the population. Moreover, capitalism does not consist of the workings of a unified capital; the diffusing of the capital into all the possible corners through the constitution of a network of markets is a necessity for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production, together with the imposed specialization in work.

¹⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 49.

Thus what we have is the dividing up of life into parts, factories, commerce centers and so on devoted to work; and the parks, cinemas, holiday villages, shopping malls etc. left for leisure and consumption; and a corresponding break constituted between the public and private spheres. Another objective of these constant fragmentations is to make visible the “poverty” and “dirtiness” of the unprivileged classes and to label them as sources of “social sickness” so as to exclude them from the centers. Such was the aim of the Tarlabası Alley that crudely separates the İstiklal Street from Tarlabası in order to guarantee that everybody knows his appropriate place in the social scale.¹⁶

These demarcations in space create an essentially split up conception of time that annihilates from the start any possibility of constituting a unified and meaningful narrative. Corresponding to the dichotomy that is constructed between work/leisure places, there exists a split within the modern conception of time that allows us to represent experience only in parts that cannot connect to each other. Thus, while notions such as intellect, production, and action are confined to the limits of work time, leisure time is supposed to be reserved for relaxation, enjoyment, consumption and it implies an irrevocable “emptiness” that has to be filled in this or that way. But when any dialectical relationship is denied between the two spheres, neither joy is joy, nor intellect is intellect. Both of them remain partial; unnourished and unsatisfied; marking the individual’s identity with an irrevocable split.

¹⁶ The plans to transform the Tarlabası Street into a wide avenue date back to the 50’s. In the 60’s and 70’s, as Tarlabası came to host immigrants from the lower classes, these plans were revived. Despite the oppositions of the Council of Monuments and some other organizations a plan that foresaw the construction of an avenue of 36 meters width was put to practice in 1986. The project was completed two years later in 1988. Not only did the realization of the plan cause the unlawful demolition of many historical buildings, but it also resulted in the isolation of the lower class people living in Tarlabası.
(<http://www.gmtr.com.tr/index.php?action=displayAnalizNode&ID=94&pID=33>)

Benjamin had been one of the thinkers who had observed the effects of industrialization and urbanization on the nature of subjective experience. According to him, the devaluation of artisanal creation and its substitution by the repetitious labor of the assembly line had “skewed the modalities of experience in favor of *Erlebnis* rather than *Erfahrung*.”¹⁷

[...] the two German words for experience, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, connote different ideas of how this historical process can occur. The former suggests the prereflexively registered influx of stimuli from without or the upsurge of stimuli, either somatic or psychic, from within. [...] The contrasting term, *Erfahrung*, implies a more complexly mediated, historically integrated, and culturally filtered totalization of those stimuli into a meaningful pattern.¹⁸

In a society which is informed totally by the end-oriented ratio of the assembly line, which can be characterized by speed that constantly shortens the durations and multiplies the stimuli, the modern man is left with the sole choice of reacting to what the moment presents. Here, a reactionary attitude is mistaken for a constitutive act: While the increasingly automatized life under the conditions of industrialism and urbanism bring forth the objective powers as the real subjects of social and urban experience, the subject still takes his acts and thoughts as the constitutive elements of this experience.

More than anything else the modern city is characterized by a continuous network of communication and transportation. Yet, first of all, this continuity in space is only partial; it is based upon the exclusion of the periphery, the intentional inhibition of the circulation of the disadvantaged of the city. Subject to the laws of globalization, the metropolis is structured in such a way as to guarantee the accumulation of capital, and commodities in the

¹⁷ Martin Jay, “Songs of Experience: Reflections on the Debate over *Alltagsgeschichte*,” in *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time* (London: The Athlone Press, 1998), 45.

¹⁸ Martin Jay, “Songs of Experience: Reflections on the Debate over *Alltagsgeschichte*,” in *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time* (London: The Athlone Press, 1998), 44.

centers, while at the same time restricting the mobility of the people. Thus Kadir Topbaş, the mayor of Istanbul, declares that the demand coming from the peripheries for public transport to Taksim will not be met. If the demand were to be met, he proposes, the traffic would be totally blocked.

However, it is not only the disadvantaged of the city who are trapped in immobility in the middle of that restlessly mobile space. The continuity of the city distracts that of time. Despite the constant flow of people, goods, money and signs this space is, in a way, frozen in terms of time. As one modality of experience (*Erfahrung*) leaves the way for another (*Erlebnis*), the historical aspect of subjective experience is slowly annihilated. In that rush to react to the overabundance of stimuli, experience turns into something with no past and no future; something that is confined to the limits of the present moment. No instance, no singular event connects to the others in order to form a narrative, just as the subject no longer connects to a communal context that functions both as the generator of a collective meaning and as the background against which differences become visible. The gradual unfolding of a narrative in time through the deployment of various temporal forms that mark the events with significance is replaced by the repetition of identical moments bearing multifarious images, signs, and events whose significance last only until the emergence of the next event. Time loses its identity as the bedrock of experience and becomes the sum total of identical moments, and hours that can be calculated by clocks.

Members of the Frankfurt School, and especially Horkheimer and Adorno, had criticized positivism for dismissing the mediation between the subject and the object, the ongoing dialectical process in social life, and

representing social life as an agglomeration of immediate social “facts” which are complete in themselves and have no relationship with the other, equally self-contained facts. Horkheimer had argued that the positivist emphasis on the immediate – passed off as fact – had resulted in the “abdication of reflection”¹⁹ since this kind of an outlook had rejected the validity of anything that goes beyond mere presence and in this way had encouraged the overseeing of the dialectical “interplay between the particular and the universal, of moment [Jay’s note: Das moment in German means a phase or aspect of a cumulative dialectical process] and totality”²⁰ underneath the surface of immediacy.

These criticisms became more urgent as the positivist representations of social life slowly descended down from the realm of thought to that of practice and started to determine the modality of experience. Adorno had seen the tendency to “reify the given” encouraged by positivism as closely “related to [...] the destruction of Erfahrung”²¹. The annihilation of the “force field”²² – the space of mediation in the terminology of Adorno – between the subject and the object implied the rejection of any possibility of historical change and the subject’s imprisonment within a repetitive time.

Virilio defines the *real time* of globalization as “hysterical” and comments that “the time needed for reflection is outdone; the time of the conditioned reflex is the order of the day...”²³ Non-places, as the ultimate instances of modern space, present the extreme cases of this erosion of

¹⁹ Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 62.

²⁰ Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 54.

²¹ Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 70.

²² Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 69.

²³ Paul Virilio, *City of Panic* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005), 52.

reflection. The seemingly unified and self-contained image these places present of themselves can only be achieved at the expense of the subject's detachment from her identity. Severing the individual from her past and future, entrapping her in the instantaneity of the messages and signs, replacing the objects of memory with high-tech devices that transmit institutional and commercial images of the subject herself, these places substitute the constantly changing identity of the individual with an abstract and stable 'humanness'.

While the individual is present to herself in all the messages and signs transmitted to her, she is lost to herself in terms of her social relations, her past and memory. The high-tech devices characterize these places. First of all, they give the impression that the ultimate point of progress has been reached which is a point that permits neither narrativity nor history to enter into the sphere of life. Nothing historical is accepted to the non-places unless it is transformed into a commodity. In addition to the exclusion of history, these places defined by high technology and speed, hide the fact that their functioning depends on the production of very dense networks on both the surface and the depths of the earth (and the outer space should also be remembered) which creates the illusion that everything takes place here and now.

Thus, the individual's detachment from the past, her identity and social relations, together with the endless stimuli that forces her to react instantaneously, leaves the individual neither time nor content to reflect upon. The result is a life that is made up of repetitive parts underlined by a loss of narrative. In a letter addressed to Lowenthal Horkheimer writes the following about the culture industry:

You will remember those terrible scenes in the movies when some years of a hero's life are pictured in a series of shots which take about one or two minutes, just to show how he grew up or old, how a war started and passed by, a[nd] s[o] o[n]. This trimming of an existence into some futile moments which can be characterized schematically symbolizes the dissolution of humanity into elements of administration.²⁴

A schema imitates historical change but in actuality what takes place is the resignation of the subject to a narrative-less and automatized reality that reorganizes subjective experience according to the criteria of governability. What Horkheimer observes in the movies, Sennett observes in relation to the experience of labor in the post-industrial era: The division of life into easily-administrable and disconnected parts which increases efficiency and profitability in the workplace while “corroding character” on all the fronts of life. Sennett suggests that besides the global marketplace and the new technologies, it is the “new ways of organizing time” which defines the capitalism of the post-industrial world. The motto “No long term” clearly expresses the features of this new ways of organizing work time²⁵: Rather than pursuing long-term careers people are transported from one task to another which have little affinity with each other; consequently easy adaptability to the skills every different task necessitates becomes more valuable for survival than past experience and the wisdom it may bestow; dispersible teams are appointed to these tasks, members of these teams remain attached to each other only until another project is defined which is to be pursued by a reorganized team.

²⁴ Max Horkheimer, Letter to Lowenthal (October 14, 1942) quoted in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 214.

²⁵ Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 22.

“Management wants now to think of organizations as networks”²⁶; meaning that, according to the changing array of interests and needs, the chains in the network can disconnect and reconnect to each other without difficulty. All this indicates that the long-term that is needed for making up the content of a life story, of relations with the self and with others is dismissed as dysfunctional. Yet, on another plane, organizing time in this way is more harmful than profitable. One of the people Sennett talks to while doing research for his book, Rico, tries to explain “that the material changes embodied in the motto ‘No long term’ have become dysfunctional for him [...], but as guides to personal character”. When transported to the sphere of personal life, the qualities needed for surviving in the new economy turn into traps that imprison people in static presences. So the question arises: “How can a human being develop a narrative of identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments?”²⁷

It is not that non-places totally annul the possibility of forming a meaningful and unified narrative; but they turn it into a painful task that can either never be fulfilled or miraculously fulfilled against all the odds, including the subject herself. Actually, non-places have become one of the settings for contemporary literature. Tim Parks’ novel *Destiny* presents an example of this and it is so thoroughly marked with the fragmented character of the non-places that what the reader witnesses is mainly the endless effort of the anti-hero to *think*. In a constant movement, going from the hotel to the airport, flying and again landing in a transitory spot, Chris Burton tries very hard not to let the

²⁶ Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 23.

²⁷ Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 26.

most delicate and important matters of his life (his son's suicide, his marriage, etc.) to be effected in the same way as his body from the incredible speed of time. It seems that the literature of non-places is an answer to the contemporary belief that life can only continue through the sacrifice of narrativity.

THE ACTUALIZATION OF REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE

Lefebvre draws a demarcation line between representations of space and representational spaces. Although these two notions and their various modes of relation constitute one of the thick and continuous layers of the whole text, simply defined, representations of space designate the dominant conception of space within a specific historical period which arises out of the collaboration between knowledge and power (basically, the dominant mode of power, i.e. the state, and the prevailing mode of production). As Lefebvre argues these representations are “shot through with knowledge”, yet this knowledge by definition tends towards ideology since it serves the aims of power. This ideological form of knowledge enables power to diffuse into the everyday realm, transforming it from something imposed from above into a daily practice. In this process of transformation knowledge itself is overturned: Losing its critical dimension it becomes a techno-knowledge of achieving specified goals. Setting itself apart from and claiming a higher authority than that of lived experience, this form of knowledge produces a discourse on capabilities rather than on potentialities.

As the products of a knowledge intertwined with power; in all of their historical manifestations, these representations have as their objective the controlling of phenomena through techniques such as categorization, classification, and abstraction all of which tend towards reducing the

phenomenon to a static and one-dimensional identity. Lefebvre defines this space as “the space of all those who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived”²⁸; that is, represented. Thus as observed in the modern representations of space (plans, projections, maps) the multilayered reality of life is reduced to two-dimensional drawings which do not only disregard the lived but also substitute it with what is conceived. A walk in the city with its detours, experiences, and events is substituted with street names and signs, and the dweller who confronts obstacles and amusements, who hesitates and changes her way; in short; she, who weaves herself a path, is replaced by a figure in a sketch that follows signs.

Representational spaces, on the other hand, correspond to “lived space”. It is “the space of ‘inhabitants’”²⁹ and as such it is both the locus of an imagination that embodies the possibility of producing a different space and the object of the reductive operations of the representations of space. The analysis of the ways the representations of space become totally detached from the representational spaces within an overall context of capitalist accumulation and the effects of such a divorce on subjective experience constitutes one of the aims of this paper.

According to Michel de Certeau representations of space are the products of a vision that situates itself up above and gazes coldly without either touching or being touched. As distanced as they are from the experience of the street, they lose connection with all the senses except vision, which “transforms the bewitching world by which one was ‘possessed’ into a text that

²⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 38.

²⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 39.

lies before one's eyes."³⁰ This allusion to a text that is meant to be deciphered and not lived first of all transports the urban experience from the realm of life to that of a knowledge detached from practice. Marshall McLuhan explains that the written text by definition implies the privileging of the sense of vision because it projects the multidimensional experience of life that emerges out of the interplay among all the senses onto a flat plane that is meaningful only in relation to the eye. This kind of a translation entails a reduction in the sense that it remains indifferent to the experiences that are presented by the other senses.

In this process whereby vision, and together with it the visible, exert their hegemony all other senses lose their validity. While the spoken word is not only addressed to the ear but also touches the body – it warns against danger, repels or arouses, and so on –; the written word is meant solely for the eye that in the moment of reading turns into a point of view. In contrast to the oral language which is indicative of a simultaneity that embraces all the layers of meaning at a time and forms various constellations of emphasis (shifts of emphasis occur without leaving out the elements that are attributed less importance), writing is a linear system that imposes homogeneity on meaning. It carries the layers that are piled up on top of one another to a surface that retains an equal distance towards all elements. Intensity of the body is substituted with a sequence that the eye can follow; and moreover, this vision, just because of its equal distance in respect to the elements and its ability to follow, is supposedly endowed with a rationality capable of judging.

³⁰ Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

Therefore, one of the most important consequences of this line of thought is that through attributing primacy to only one of the senses (i.e., vision) it subtracts the total body from the experience of space; as if space could emerge without the interplay of the bodies; or, as if the act of seeing was the prerequisite of both the body and its space. It is true that vision, together with the language that carries it to the fore, participate in the production process of space; however, by themselves, they are powerless. Or, to express it in other words, to set vision as an autonomous force in the production process of space serves to the impoverishing rather than to the enrichment of urban experience. To subjugate social practice, and together with it the spatial practice that it embodies, to the laws of vision means to render the fluidity of life immobile. It is only with the aid of other senses that sight can reach out to the object emphatically³¹; without their guidance it knows only to fix the thing in place so that it does not slide away from its framework and leave its domain of control.

The dissociation of the sense of vision from the audile-tactile world implies its divorce from the body: Now, as it is dislocated from the body, vision has to find itself a new residing place and it turns out to be static point. Such a residing place seems to be shared by both perspective and chronological writing which are interrelated phenomena whose identifying character is the consistency of a “point of view”. In fact, this very consistency and stability of a viewpoint is what imposes a semi-illusionary/semi-real stability on the content (i.e. spatial practice) itself. A linear progression flowing from a fixed point operates in such a way that the forthcoming element (the word, sentence,

³¹ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 37.

building or the event itself which is represented on a syntactical lineal basis) should prepare the grounds for the following element; this kind of narration cannot tolerate any ambiguity that will erode the coherence of the text/structure as it is what endows the text in question with meaning. Thus, it becomes apparent that the chronological narrative, or perspective in general (in architecture, arts, etc.) for that matter, as a form, can only maintain a strictly formal relationship with its content: It either assimilates all the phenomena to its framework, assigning all of them a fixed place, or excludes altogether that which exceeds the limits of its paradigm – in the sense of a conceptual framework composed of well-defined rules – and thus threatens its validity. Such a reductive attitude stands in contrast to the simultaneous forms of meaning that take into consideration the whole network of relationships in all their complexity and which endow value not so much to consistency but to the peculiarity of the world created by the body.

To be sure, to assign the whole responsibility to that discourse that severs knowledge from lived experience and authorizes a language as the beholder of truth and the engenderer of space would be a reductive attitude itself. This immobilization and reduction generated by words (as signs), concepts and representations can be this effective only after the invention of print and only as the elements of more comprehensive socio-economic and cultural transformations; namely capitalist industrialization, bureaucracy, and the institutionalization of the nation state. I will return to the impact of this “visual formant” later in the context of non-places. But for now, what I want to emphasize is that the representations of space, as by definition they “tend [...]”

towards a system of verbal signs”³², introduce abstraction into the sphere of the body and transport it from the realm of the lived to that of the conceived.

Lefebvre argues that although in general we cannot talk of a “code of space”, some periods in history, such as the period that gave rise to the Renaissance town, could generate a specific code of space which is observable in the spatial practice and organization of that society. By a “code of space” what is referred to is a language that is capable of representing the urban reality out of which it has arisen. The production of this common language first of all depends on the recognition of the town as a unified subject that plays an active role in the production process rather than as the sum total of isolated spatial elements. It is only with such a consciousness of totality that a relational paradigm between the various elements of space can be formed.

Such a code is formed by the forces of production available and it finds expression usually in the conceptions (representations) of space rather than through the representational spaces. Once the spatial code of the Renaissance town was established, “‘people’ – inhabitants, builders, politicians – stopped going from urban messages to the code in order to decipher reality, to decode town and country, and *began instead to go from code to messages*, so as to produce a discourse and a reality adequate to the code.”³³ This code is of course the product of practice; and in this respect it has nothing abstract about it: Rather than being an idea imposed from above it is realized in space through the daily routine of the inhabitants (thus Lefebvre mentions that perspective, which is one of the major defining spatial elements of this period, is actualized through the organization of the streets and the façades, and thus, it becomes a

³² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 39.

³³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 47. Italics are mine.

reality of social life). However, there exists an institutional gap between the semi-unconscious acts of the inhabitants (and the builders and politicians) that give rise to the code and the resulting consciousness of the code. What I mean is that, to the extent that the code of the Renaissance town is institutionalized it tends to sever itself from the everyday practice and it eventually adopts an autonomous identity.

This institutionalized code, becomes the real subject of the town, and from that moment on it begins to organize the urban experience of the inhabitants. What is decisive in this context is that the transfer of authority in regard to the constitution of urban experience from the direct users of that space to a totalizing code – and to those who had participated in a more cognizant fashion in the production of this code – also entails the substitution of the heterogeneity and opacity of the lived experience by the homogeneity and the illusionary transparency of a conceived reality. When considered in its historical context, it can be argued that such a code was revolutionary in character. And indeed it was. The substitution of random acts by conscious ones opened the way for inventions and progress, for the accumulation of wealth and knowledge. However, it also opened the way to the separation of the representations of space from representational spaces which could be actualized in totality only with the advent of the abstract space (actually this separation is a constitutive element in the production of abstract space). As we will see the autonomy achieved by the representations of space will give rise to a violence that is as conscious as the plans and projects themselves.

Representations of space present the space they are conceptualizing as enclosed structures; as completed, and thus, stable in nature. In actuality, this is

the outcome of the projection of the very rigidity of these representations themselves onto the lived space. Urban planning, that sector which plays the leading role in the actualization of the representations of space in modernity, proceeds with the rules of conceived space and in order to render itself valid it imposes these rules to lived space itself. In other words, in order to render the rules of conceived space applicable to the real, living space, the latter is portrayed as a simple reflection of the former: The exactitude and strictness of the plans and projects are attributed to spatial practice itself, as if the conceived space was the generator of social space.

In this process, the alive aspects of spatial practice such as interaction, conflict, and negotiation are either totally dismissed from attention, or, if and when they are taken into consideration, evaluation remains strictly within the limits of a quantitative analysis: They are calculated just like the lengths of the buildings, and the width of the avenues are calculated. Or it may be that the reverse is true; that in abstract space, and especially in non-places, the above-mentioned calculations are perfected to achieve such a quality that the spatial practice is transformed into a sum of data that can be easily calculated, so as to create a kind of “economy of space” (what Lefebvre defines as “spatial economy”³⁴). Meaning that the (quantitative) quality of the airports, highways, shopping malls, the exact application of the plans to social space – in certain very poor examples this application becomes so ignorant of the human factor that it becomes threatening; such is the case in the Cevahir

³⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 56.

shopping center³⁵ – erodes the quality of spatial practice and reduces its dynamic character to the static character of plans.

Yet, unlike the designs and plans of the urban designers and architects which design the urban realm as a static, empty medium that can accept whatever is imposed upon it; the space of the users is a fluid one that defies the stabilization of a cold look that fixes everything it sees in a place; and reduces the multidimensional, and “opaque” reality of the urban life that is informed by the interplay between all the senses to the transparency and stability of a sheet of paper. This fluidity derives from the body which constitutes the condition of possibility of space. Against the representation of space as an empty container with no specific relationship to what it contains, Lefebvre argues that “the body with the energies at its disposal, the living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of space, which is to say the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies”.³⁶ This means that space (either the space of nature or a social space) exists prior to the entrance of a particular body and thus, the existence of certain rules and laws concerning the use and occupation of this space that cannot be easily overthrown by it cannot be denied.

Still, the space we are referring to is neither the product of a will that exceeds in power the limits of social reality nor of representations (although they play an important role) but of a bodily, “active occupation” by prior bodies that shape their bedrock of existence through the energies they dispose,

³⁵ The Cevahir Shopping Center which is situated in Şişli, İstanbul has been opened in 15.10.2005 as the biggest shopping mall of Turkey. Within a few months, it became the scene of two deaths. A three years-old girl, and two weeks later a boy of 16, have lost their lives by falling from the moving stairways. In reply to the criticisms that the banisters were shorter than they had to be, a member of the executive board said: “They are not short. The latest technology was used here.” (<http://www.nethaber.com/Haber/6653/Cevahir-Alisveris-Merkezinde-dun-bir>)

³⁶Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 170.

and the marks and traces they inscribe; in short, bodies that “qualify”³⁷ their space. The particular body is born into this already socialized space, yet this does not mean that it is entrapped within the unshakeable laws of a once and for all established space that remains unaffected by the actions of the body. Rather, the qualification process is perpetual. Space, as the locus of possibilities whose number and identity cannot be easily predicted, is constantly rearticulated through the practices of the spatial body. Qualification and spatial practice entail a body that at times aims at breaking the given rules, at other times multiplies the possibilities provided by space, and still at others, actualizes the given rules without too much resistance. Total conformity to the rules that govern a social space is in actuality only an ideal state which can never constitute the whole of spatial practice, but can only be valid for places with specific characteristics.

Representations of space operate through transforming a process of becoming, an unfolding in time with its detours, various configurations, and ruptures into a “presence” with a static identity. This constant presence does not only assimilate the past and the future to its own system of meaning but it also demands a reification, a materiality that will ensure the continuity and validity of this system throughout time. In other words, historicity is imaginarily defeated by way of concrete works that, through their durability and the institutional power they are imbued with, constantly reaffirm the truth of an absolute presence. To give an example, monuments may be perceived as the important components of a spatial organization that is both embedded in the social order and also functioning as one of the primary media that facilitate the

³⁷Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 174.

reproduction of that order. Monuments are constructed with the principle of resisting the effects of both history and nature and in that sense they mark the social order they are signifying with an imaginary transcendence over time; they represent it as an eternal system and consequently provide it with both a symbolic and material basis of legitimacy – ‘that which transcends time is universally valid’.

Relatively, a kind of knowledge that situates itself within these representations claims to be the natural reflection of such a static presence with clear-cut boundaries and definite qualities. This kind of a knowledge that is blind to the dynamics of lived experience organizes its object in such a manner that all phenomena emerge as the constituent parts of a supposedly essential structure, all of them assigned a proper place. Within such a context, all phenomena are reduced to the differently disguised manifestations of the same essential truth. In other words, such a knowledge does not only assert the superiority of an abstract and unchanging reality over lived experience but also projects the thing/being as a simple element with no significance and meaning apart from being a part and sustaining the validity of the whole. Consequently, it can be argued that the representations of space and the corresponding form of knowledge are nourished from sameness, rather than otherness and difference.

Such an argument does not imply that these representations are immune to change. On the contrary, representations are the products of history and have nothing essential about them. The main conception of space valid for the Renaissance town is utterly different from that of the twentieth century Western city; representations had already an impact on the conceptualization and experience of space before the invention of maps, plans and projects.

However, because representations have a general inclination towards institutionalization; in other words, because “their intervention occurs by way of construction, ... by way of architecture ... as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which call for representations that will not vanish into the imaginary or symbolic realms”³⁸ they tend to persist and present themselves as everlasting in contrast to an ever-changing and unstable everyday life. This does not mean that contradictory views or different paradigms are totally eliminated from such an institutionalized knowledge; yet these different perspectives do not question the identity of knowledge as they are still presented in the form of perspectives that can operate only through the reduction of the quality of life; they are safely located within the same system of thought.³⁹

In contrast to the sameness that the representations develop upon, the body emerges as the locus of difference; first, because of its potentiality to give rise to a space (its own space) and to implant new possibilities in this space; and secondly because of its embeddedness in a qualitative time. Space and time are interrelated phenomena whose conceptual divorce cannot take place without effecting a reduction in the qualities of both. The body deploys its energies within a specific space in concordance with the rules of that space, yet, at the same time, this body marks its own space with a temporality through the rhythms of its space-producing actions – such as gestures. And in doing so

³⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 42.

³⁹ Here, I have in mind the distinction Lefebvre draws between “*induced* and *produced* differences” in *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 372:

An *induced* difference remains within a set or system generated according to a particular law. [...] the diversity between villas in a suburb filled with villas; or between different ‘community facilities’.... By contrast, a *produced* difference presupposes the shattering of a system; it is born of an explosion; it emerges from the chasm opened up when a closed universe ruptures.

it strips the space in question of its illusory stability and opens it up to transformation; diverse rhythms give rise to different spaces, varying time sequences present different modes of interconnecting the spatial elements and thus articulate spatial experience in different modes. Either in the form of rhythms that qualify a spatial act or in the form of modes of temporal articulation that open spatial practice to narrativity, it is temporality that sustains the continuity of spatial experience. However, the continuity of spatio-temporal experience is radically different from that imposed by representations and signs.

Representations present continuity in the form of an abstract pattern that recurs throughout history, without being affected by this history. It could be argued that this form of continuity is equivalent to stability: The stability of the social order that is sustained by way of the material forms and products of the dominant conception of space such as urban planning, architectural plans, signs, and which is enacted, and thus perpetually reaffirmed, by the daily practices of the inhabitants. As I have discussed above, ideologies tend to institutionalize themselves in space, to carve out a proper place for themselves with clear-cut boundaries, in order to guarantee their authority in the construction and control of social life: Expressed simply, the permanence of the place is mistaken for the truth value of the ideology, or the system. Such an ideological logic subjugates time to the rules of its spatial determinations; the result is a rigid space that acts more as an imposer of abstract rules than as a locus of experience. And time, under the reign of this ideological logic, is deprived of its inherent elements such as ruptures, breaks, and different turns and reduced to a lineal narrative that echoes the power of this spatial authority.

Poly-rhythmic gestures that give rise to diversity are replaced by mono-rhythmic ones that put the emphasis on senseless repetition and produce nothing but homogeneity. Paradoxically, what is arrived at is a time conception that disregards the dynamics of time.

To think of subjective experience as totally unaffected by the spatio-temporal determinations and conceptualizations of modernity is impossible since both the subject and its experience are the products of the modernist system of thought. The notion of experience privileges the subject and endows it with a consciousness (and intentionality) that transgresses the constructive power of institutional techniques and procedures. Also, the term implicitly indicates the power of the subject to retain its identity under all circumstances: “The apparent continuity (in consciousness) of subjective experience; the tendency of the subject to maintain the same I in all encounters; its ability to penetrate into everything and to internalize everything”⁴⁰ To this extent, a similarity between the time of conceived space and the time perception of the experiencing subject can be detected: it can be argued that the tendency of the subject to sustain its identity does not so much contradict on the conceptual level with the sameness promoted by the representations. However, such an argument misses the point that lived space does not so much refer to a ready-made space that is received indifferently by the subject, as to a reciprocal relationship between the space and the subject in which experience plays the role of the mediator: the subject appropriates space in order to create *its* space and in this process of appropriation it is not only space but also the subject that is reconstituted. Thus, it is appropriation rather than assimilation that

⁴⁰ Orhan Koçak, “Melih Cevdet: İkinci Yeniden Sonra,” *Defter*, no: 14 (July- November 1990): 23.

characterizes experience; the experiencing subject – the conscious body ('I') that produces space through its experiences – is not a self-contained entity with pre-determined boundaries. On the contrary, experience is not really possible without the challenging of limits, as it indicates the collapse of the barriers between the subject and the object.

The experiencing subject is deeply situated within a qualitative time: Despite the high value attributed to the present moment in experience, the temporal situatedness (and awareness) of the subject prevents it from rendering this moment absolute, from being stuck in it. The importance of the present moment derives from its power to influence the perception of the subject in relation to both the past and the future. In that moment when the subject encounters that which had been unknown hitherto, the limits of its identity – limits in terms of prejudices, values, and manners – are eroded in order to come to terms with this new thing, in order to be able to get into a reciprocal relationship with it that will eventually reconstitute both the object and the subject. In this process the subject's position in relation to her past and future also changes: the past becomes perceived under a new light, layers of it which had been previously unrecognized come to the fore, and memories change shape in order to give rise to a new configuration with new meanings.

At this point recourse to Benjamin on experience would be helpful in order to qualify the notion of experience that I have been referring to. Benjamin's thought on experience is significant in this context because he emphasizes the intricate interconnections between experience, time, narrativity, memory and place. The recognition of these connections allows an understanding at least of what is *lacking* in abstract space – in that space of

industrial accumulation and abstract labor, of repetition and exchange, of organizational rules, and institutional power – and the impact of such a subtraction on the quality of experience.

Benjamin perceives memory as “a mode of relating to the past that” does “not claim the ability to recapture retrospectively the entirety of what had preceded the present as if it were a single coherent plot”.⁴¹ This is a kind of remembrance that retains the “aura” of the past which is defined in relation to (natural) things “as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be.”⁴² What is indicated by this phenomenon of distance radically differs from that which arises out of the fixing gaze of the expert which exerts the domination of the subject over the object. The acknowledgement of this spatio-temporal distance does not give rise to an irrecoverable split between the subject and the object (in this case, the past) that annihilates the possibility of any kind of relationship other than that of domination between the two; but rather enables multiple modes of productive and imaginative relationships to flourish between then and now, here and there. Experience of the past is possible only when the subject recognizes it not as a self-contained entity, or a completed story that yields itself readily to the logos of the subject but as an “other” which presents gaps and breaks. It is from these interstices, which distinguish the subject and the object but also make their interaction and momentary connection possible, that various stories unfold that rearticulate the past, but also the future.

⁴¹ Martin Jay, “Lamenting the Crisis of Experience: Benjamin and Adorno,” in *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2005), 335.

⁴² Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hanna Arendt (London: Fontana Books, 1973), 224.

The realization that even the past which had been thought to be immobile can turn out to be open to constant reconfiguration marks the future as totally indefinite, as the locus of unanticipated possibilities that defy all plans and projects. The future emerges as a source of anxiety, as the bedrock of uncertainties which also harbors the possibility of a total loss, of the annihilation of the subject. This is exactly why the subject cannot remain identical with itself in a frozen moment. In order to overcome this anxiety, in order to convert the negative potential to a positive one, the subject has to produce meaning through experiences that can be translated into narratives that will not entrap the self within rigid boundaries but constantly rearticulate its identity in relation to both the past and the future. Consequently, it is not that the subject sustains its identity despite the changes produced by experience; on the contrary, identity can be constituted only through transformative experiences.

To be able to forget, but not to lose the self, in order to reach out to the other; to allude to a memory that does not nourish from the official and assert the domination of the subject over the object; to build up a historical identity interwoven with stories, all of these seem to be elements that make up experience which Benjamin defines as the “uniform and continuous multiplicity of knowledge”.⁴³ What Benjamin offers is a form of knowledge that seeks meaning rather than coherence; an experience that can be transmitted to others through narratives, which will thus become the property of a community and be the subject of multiple interpretations and different modes of articulation. In other words, what is proposed is a form of knowledge that is

⁴³ Martin Jay, “Lamenting the Crisis of Experience: Benjamin and Adorno,” in *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2005), 323.

neither limited to the sphere of concepts nor to those subjects who, by way of their position, have access to this sphere but a “*differential* knowledge”⁴⁴ that is open to the contributions of all spheres and supports the constant reconstitution of meaning. Such a knowledge will let culture to produce ever new alternatives rather than to recede into a sum of normative rules and fruitless stereotypes. Thus, Benjamin explains how this continuation and enrichment of culture is provided through narratives which he locates at the very center of his philosophy of experience:

In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers. But if today ‘having counsel’ is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing. In consequence we have no counsel either for ourselves or for others. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. To seek this counsel one would first be able to tell the story.⁴⁵

Experience is a journey⁴⁶ traveled not only in time but also in a space by bodies which qualify their space. Spatial differentiation, which constitutes a part of this qualification practice, can be traced back to the initial encounter of the child with her own image reflected on the mirror. The symbolic role this special object plays in the constitution process of the subject is frequently emphasized by not only psychoanalysts but also other social theorists who deal with the subject of identity formation. The imaginary space produced through the reflective surface of the mirror exhibits to the child her detachment from

⁴⁴ I borrow the adjective “differential” from Lefebvre who uses the term “differential space” in order to indicate a space which will arise out of the inherent contradictions of abstract space and in which the coexistence of heterogeneous paradigms and the reunification of formerly dissociated spheres is promoted.

⁴⁵ Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hanna Arendt (London: Fontana Books, 1973), 86.

⁴⁶ *Fahrt* of *Erfahrung* (experience) means journey in German. Martin Jay, “The Trial of ‘Experience’: From the Greeks to Montaigne and Bacon,” in *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley; Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2005), 11.

the mother; symbolically marking the passage from an indifferentiation –unity with the mother – to the recognition of the self as a separate entity. In other words, the mirror stage initiates a process whereby the child will eventually come to know herself as an ‘I’; meaning that she will gain a consciousness of her identity as differentiated from but still relationally dependent on the other, which is not only an image but also a space exceeding the boundaries of her own space (i.e., her body).

“The departure of the mother...” which is symbolically accomplished through the mirage-effect, “constitutes localization and exteriority against the background of an absence”.⁴⁷ Consequently, the recognition of the other emerges as the precondition of the constitution of the self. And the space that emerges in order to present the other to the subject constitutes the background upon which subsequent encounters with new objects will take place. Thus, this “produced difference”, the space that informs the subject of herself via the other prepares the way for the production of other differences.

The mirror is a surface at once pure and impure, almost material yet virtually unreal; it presents the Ego with its own material presence, calling up its counterpart, its absence from – and at the same time its inherence in – this ‘other’ space. Inasmuch as its symmetry is projected therein, the Ego is liable to ‘recognize’ itself in the ‘other’, but it does not in fact coincide with it: ‘other’ merely *represents* ‘Ego’ as an inverted image in which the left appears at the right, as a reflection which yet generates an extreme difference. [...] Here what is identical is at the same time radically other, radically different – and transparency is equivalent to opacity.⁴⁸

Space is endowed with an identity through the practices of spatial qualification that are continually re-acted. However, as much as the singular body emerges as the qualifier of space, the essential task of identity

⁴⁷Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 109.

⁴⁸Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 184-5.

construction exceeds the limits of an isolated body. Spatial qualification and differentiation leads to identity formation only when they are practiced by a communal body that does not solely expose energies or leave marks, but also thinks together with all of its members over the ways to organize these actions. Singular acts are assembled in such a way as to constitute a more or less coherent whole; spatial arrangements yield their arbitrary nature in order to become expressive of a communal identity. As indicated above the overlapping of all these conditions in order to give rise to a code of space, the production of a flawless communal practice in which almost every act finds its expression is a very rarely observed situation. In any case, it can be argued that on the communal level the production process of space becomes more complicated in order to give rise to a spatial practice and a discourse which both arises from this practice and also provides a means for thinking about it.

Neither spatial practices nor discourses remain intact; even a code of space that has proven its validity over a course of time is bound to collapse when it cannot enhance its system of thought in order to render legible newly emerging spatial practices. In a similar way, practices and discourses depend upon narratives that will sustain them at the local level. Narratives form a paradigm that will connect together spatial structures, events, and acts in order to give rise to a meaningful practice whose subject is the community. Without narratives, actions and events would remain disconnected, producing abstract discourses which reduce the community to an agglomeration of persons, who, due to this abstraction from the social context, lose their ability to generate a collective experience, and a space that functions as the productive bedrock of

that experience. In a way, narratives provide a local source of legitimacy for discourses and practices.

This does not imply that these narratives promote total submission to the rules of these discursive and non-discursive practices. They also subvert them in order for the inhabitants to recognize themselves in their spatial practices; new elements are added; others are rearticulated in order to become meaningful in the eyes of the local user; still others that cannot find expression in the local context are totally discarded from the plot of the story. And in a paradoxical manner, it is not so much the confirmative aspects of the stories but the subversive ones that enable the continuation of a spatial practice; preventing it from turning into a enclosed system that will eventually dissolve: The work of spatial narratives is not only to provide a source of unification, they are also attempts to render meaningful the particularities and differences within the community. They do not present the identity that is formed by practices as a frozen entity; but rather, exhibit the contradictions inherent in this identity, bring out the breaks and different layers that make it up and thus, turn it into something that can be experienced. Through narratives, spatial identity becomes the work of the whole group and not something that is imposed from above.

By means of these stories, spatial practice gives rise to a “recognition effect”⁴⁹ that is similar to, but exceeding in limits, the constitutive power of the mirror-effect that is experienced by the individual. While the individual mirror symbolically triggers the constitution process of subjective identity, the collective one carries this process to the communal level; enabling all the

⁴⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 220.

members to locate themselves within the spatial order – and the social order it implies – and participate in varying degrees to the production of identity. Therefore, it can be argued that the spatial practice and organization of a group presents clues regarding the identity of that group. However, this argument should not be carried far enough to give rise to the “illusion of a society so transparent to itself that it is fully expressed in the most trivial of its usages, in any one of its institutions, and in the total personality of each of its members.”⁵⁰

The spatial practice of a society does not express the identity of a society in its totality and this is so because of various reasons: First of all, what is called identity is not a simple entity whose codes are readily accessible to an analysis of spatial structure; rather it is a complicated composite of interpenetrating layers of practices and discourses. And secondly, the production of space is a complicated process in which multiple centers of action with varying degrees of influential power participate and the end product itself (i.e., space) does not usually inform about all these intertwined dimensions of the process itself. That is to say, “space conceals as much as it reveals” and therefore it may easily turn into a trap that deceives the analyst.

Moreover, this illusion threatens to misguide not only the analyst but also the inhabitants of the place. In certain situations, the mirror-effect may turn into a weapon that threatens the formation and maintenance of identity rather than acting as an initiator. At the individual level, the danger of losing oneself in the reflected image arises if this image is mistaken for the identical double of the self; that is to say, if the consciousness of the other is lost. And,

⁵⁰ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), 44.

at the communal level, to form a relationship of total identification between the identity of a society and its spatial order results in the acceptance of this order – which embeds the social order – as natural rather than as the work of specific forces.

What kind of consequences does such a condition entail for the consciousness of the subject? Articulated in a different manner the question is: What happens to consciousness when the other is not recognized in its “otherness,” but transformed into a repetition producing no difference, a mere reflection that constantly refers back to the self? The most basic answer to this question is that the subject loses its ability to produce difference. These questions gain vitality in regard to abstract space which is defined by Lefebvre as that space in which representations of space, having gained almost total autonomy, exert domination over lived space; subjecting it to their formal rules. In this context, my specific concern is to understand what happens to the potentiality of the individual and the community to produce difference when the abstraction inherent in the representations of space is actualized in space.

It is not only the productive practices of bodies that generate a specific space. In order to get a more thorough understanding of a society’s space, the form of production prevailing in that society has to be taken into account too. It is obvious that the space that is generated with the techniques and tools of agriculture is utterly different from the space produced by those of industrialism. And abstract space is a specifically industrial space for various reasons. As I have mentioned above, both the reign of the written word which fixes the thing in place and deprives experience from its complex, simultaneous and bodily content, and the emergence of the “quantifiable” as the major

criterion of reality could only be realized within an overall context of industrialization. The first of these late developments exhibits a somewhat paradoxical phenomenon: While on the one hand, writing and print technology participate in the construction of the autonomous subject they at the same time initiate a process whereby subjective experience which momentarily unites the subject and the object (the other that is presented by life) is replaced by a constant separation, which detaches the subject from her experience. As the demarcation line between everything that life presents for experience and the subject gets more rigid (and thus harder to transgresses) experience becomes increasingly formalized and the subject is gradually rendered contentless; reduced to a form that remains the same through all her encounters. In a twisted manner, the birth of the subject heralds its death.

Similarly, the privileging of quantity over quality entails the reduction of the potentialities of the body and eventually lets bodies to exist only as abstracted entities. Both of these phenomena are the constitutive elements of abstract space and relatively they can be institutionalized within the general practice of industrialism. Together with the general practice of industrialism a new “‘grammar of thought’”⁵¹ emerges. This system of thought will eventually become deeply rooted in society and will be transformed into a pervasive form of perception. In regard to the “‘grammar of thought’” that I am referring what is decisive is a shift from a repetition that produces difference to one that continually repeats the same.

This is a property inherent in abstraction itself and it can be easily observed in the commodity which presents itself as detached from its

⁵¹ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1962), 23.

production process; or for that matter, in all the social phenomena that tend to conceal the dynamics of the relationships that generate them. Such a transformation is realized in abstract space by way of the substitution of spatial narratives by chains of signs, written texts, and images which interrupt the cumulative progression of narratives through the imposition of abstract rules. It is possible for a story to revolve around signs, meaning that, signs can play the role of markers in the unfolding of a narrative; yet it is not possible to compose a story solely out of signs because the main tendency of signs is towards freezing that which they signify.

The same rule applies also to the images. Wim Wenders has pointed out to the necessity of and difficulty in resisting the dominance of the image per se while trying to compose a narrative in visual form.⁵² He explains that in his movies there had been moments when he deliberately discarded an impressive image for the sake of sustaining the unity and meaningfulness of the story. A dominant image has the power to halt the narrative in a meaningless way. That is to say, it creates a rupture in the story which does not usually open up a new path to think through, but simply proposes the detached image as the ultimate truth in which it is very hard for the subject not to lose herself.

Without the existence of constantly evolving identities that feed upon narratives there only remain abstract rules that force the subject to make pseudo-choices between ready-made categories. Such is the case in non-places whose impact on urban life is becoming more severe from day to day, not just because they have proven to be unavoidable sites but also because they have

⁵² Wim Wenders, "The Urban Landscape from the Point of View of Images," in *The Act of Seeing*, 97.
http://korotonomedia2.googlepages.com/WimWenders_TheActofSeeing_1.pdf (accessed March 22, 2006)

started to become very influential regarding the organization of their surroundings. Signs which populate the non-places cannot be looked upon as the innocent signifiers of an already constituted social reality; rather they play an essential role in the institutionalization of abstract rules in space. In non-places, the body is totally absorbed into the contractual realm of the sign; meaning that it is transported from its qualified and qualifying space to the enclosed space of conventional rules in which energies, gestures and traces yield their place to actions that oscillate between the binary oppositions (yes/no, permission/prohibition, innocent/guilty) constitutive of the legal system. One of the main reasons why non-places have such an impoverishing impact on subjectivity is this absence of narrativity that defines these places.

In “anthropological places” people can articulate their positions in regard to events and practices only through representing these to themselves at the symbolic level through narratives. Relatively the absence of narrativity also entails emptying the space of the disputes, conflicts, discussions, and negotiations that re-occur in anthropological places every time decisions concerning positions have to be made. But in actuality, this is not an empty space; rather it is a space where abstraction and an institutional logic reign. The signs that organize action in non-places are direct representatives of institutional laws and; thus, what they reflect back to the individual is her own subjectivity defined by the terminology of these institutions. Consequently, in non-places what lies at the center of subjective experience is this institutionalized individual.

THE CLOSURE OF THE HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE

My overall intention in this thesis is to demonstrate that the highly abstracted public spaces of the contemporary world (non-places), despite their apparent roots in the historical spaces of early modernity, constitute a radical break with the latter in terms of the mode of experience they give rise to. In order to analyze the mode of experience that is peculiar to the postindustrial era and its abstract spaces I have focused, in the second chapter, on the separation affected between the conceptions of space and representational spaces and the consequent transformation of space from the locus of experience into a medium of power that nullifies attempts of appropriation on the part of the subject.

I have tried to explain with recourse to certain Benjaminian notions that the primacy achieved by the immobilized representations which subject life to their abstract rules has resulted in the fading away of a specific mode of experience; that is, a mode of experience in which the subject and the object (depending on the context, may be read as the thing, the past, or space) constantly deconstruct and reconstruct each other within a mutual relationship. In this mode of relationship, the subject less projects her pre-given perceptions and conceptions onto the object than lets the thing to question her identity, to be reshaped through what this particular relationship presents her. Here the aim is not so much to use the thing as a means to reaching exact knowledge as to

produce an “approximate meaning” that is always open to change through a dialogue with it. What is at stake is an unending translation process: The subject makes the thing a part of her meaning system which, in turn, challenges the limits of this signification process, rearticulating its content and form.

Today we can no longer talk about such a mode of relationship sustained with the world. Rather, the mode of the relationship the subject will form with things, time, and space is now determined by various social structures with their fixed representations and codes, with the multitude of messages, images, and signs they disseminate. If in an earlier phase of modernity social structures such as commerce, law, and science had functioned as mediators between the subject and the object, opening up multifarious paths for the individuals to relate to the world, then, in the postindustrial era, these structures have been transformed into the real subjects of a formalized experience with abstract rules into which they then draw in the subject. Stated differently, if in the historical times and spaces, through the guidance of conceptual thinking which found concrete form in the way urban life and labor was organized, knowledge and wealth was accumulated, people were realizing themselves as communities with potentialities, then in the era of ‘accumulation for accumulation’s sake’, these objective powers, as they have become the new subjects, translate these potentialities into capacities, enforcing the objects as well as the subjects into fixed and abstract identities.

This shift of agency, and the reshaping of the individual as the effect of an experience of which she had been hitherto the subject correspond to what Benjamin calls the “decay of experience” which, in actuality, does not refer so much to the total arrest of experience as to a radical repositioning of the

putative subject of experience. In this chapter, my aim is to delineate the subjective consequences and mainly the cognitive aspects of this “decay of experience”. I would argue that the process of the “expropriation of experience”, and as part and parcel of it what could be termed the “automation of meaning”, not only has a history in social space, but also it partly arises out of the relations constituted with space. Therefore, my questions concerning the issue of meaning, its production process and subject, together with the nature of the process of understanding in the present world, will revolve around space, especially non-places, both as a product and as a force productive of subjectivities.

Non-places emerge in this context as emblematic figures since they exhibit the latest point that has been reached in the abstraction of space; in this sense they function like the laboratories of the postindustrial world, presenting sterile areas in which the means of the modern loci of power for enhancing their efficacy are put to operation/test with the strictest of calculations and planning. They are the X-rays of today’s fulfilled human life, exhibiting the loss of reflectivity and the automation of agency which are definitive of the dominant mode of experience in all their impenetrable transparency.

“Code of Space” and the Formation of the Community:

In analyzing the role of spatial organization in the shift from an experience that strives towards the production of a communal meaning to an abstracted experience which foils the subject as an agent, we again come across the concept of “code of space”. Previously, I have indicated that the term refers to

the production of a unifying practice, and a language adequate to that practice, that transforms the urban realm from the agglomeration of disparate parts into an all-encompassing context. Such an urban context, whose presence is limited to certain social spaces that took shape under specific historical conditions such as the Renaissance town, does not only enable each part that it embodies to find a specific location within its confines but also engenders the formation of a “relational paradigm” between these various spatial elements. Thus following the establishment of a code of space in the Renaissance period, the “town ceases to evolve ‘after the fashion of a continuous narrative’, adding one building after another, an extension to a street, or another square to those already in existence. From now on each building, each addition was politically conceived; each innovation modified the whole, and each ‘object’ – as though it had hitherto been somehow external – came to affect the entire fabric”⁵³.

Here, we are speaking of a time in which conceptual thinking has arisen as an effective force that disrupts the unconscious flow of spatial practice and organizes social life in accordance with the specific rules of a given paradigm, but we cannot argue that the paradigm in question threatens the livelihood of the everyday realm since what we are mentioning is itself still an alive context that is rearticulated through its relation with every new element that enters its confines. Although conceptions now play an important role in the production of space they have not yet been transformed into deadly weapons that subject the whole of life to abstract rules. Rather, the code in question is constituted through the mutual relationship between the representations of space and representational spaces. In contrast to a fixed point of view which discards that

⁵³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 272.

which exceeds the limits of its frame, this urban code not only let particularities exist but it also renders possible the generation of difference. Historically designating the passage from rural space to abstract space, historical space with its code differs radically from both in terms of the social life and experience it generates.

Every space, regardless of the historical period it belongs to, exists prior to the introduction of the individual and in this sense it presents itself as an obstacle, or as a set of rules that are hard to transgress. These rules do not have to be declared, but the user finds them, even if she cannot exactly name them, always already sedimented in the structure and forms of space, in the functions it puts to use. In a rural society in which the relationship between the soil and the inhabitants is almost immediate the individual has not much chance but to obey the given rules, to act accordingly. What is referred to is a society which has witnessed neither the accumulation of wealth nor that of knowledge, and thus a society in which human intervention to space, either by way of technological devices or by way of abstract thought, is very limited. Consequently, space, as well as the whole world, appears to the individual as something that should be *participated in* – hence everybody has a specific role that partly finds expression in the spatial organization – and not *understood*, acknowledged and not transformed. In abstract space, the signs of appropriation which are produced by professionals replace appropriation itself. In contrast to both, the code of space signifies a society in which the city is open to the transformations brought about by the performances of the inhabitants.

Lefebvre compares the town to a machine, indicating that, by virtue of the “extensions and elaborations of” the “spatial arrangements and the introduction of connections”, even in its earliest stages it carried the potential of giving rise to the automation of the production process. But he also adds that “it is something more, something better” than a machine: “a machine appropriated [...] to the use of a social group”⁵⁴. In the historical space of the late medieval-early modern times, automation emerges only as a potential; despite the establishment of “urban systems” that can function more or less on their own, despite the fact that now – by virtue of the accumulation of knowledge – plans and projects for one street, one building, or square constitute the basis for the production of the others, still reflective thinking arises as the major driving force behind both the production and the experience of space.

Repetition does not yet generate sameness and each part retains its singularity, “perspectivizing” the “general”, but “in turn” depending on the general as the “foil against which its specificity becomes discernible.”⁵⁵ Moreover, what is called the “parts” of the city is not restricted to the immobile structures but also involves the acts and gestures of the inhabitants, the representations and symbols they produce, the thoughts they have in and about the city; in short, all those factors that endow the city with life, that render it experiential. In this sense, the generation of a code of space corresponds to the formation of a community that can sustain its unity due to the constant reconfiguration of common practices – both discursive and non-discursive – without abolishing the specificity of the particulars. What is achieved in

⁵⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 345.

⁵⁵ Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 52-3.

historical space, as a result of socio-economic transformations and the consequent code that organizes space, is a society which is unified in its diversity.

It can be argued that the hermeneutical circle, with the constant and mutual relationship it puts forth between the particulars and the whole, is the paradigm of understanding for such a community. Here, hermeneutics is taken as an approach to understanding which takes into consideration both the non-identity and the interrelatedness of the particular and the general. Hermeneutical approach proceeds with the recognition that the particular gains meaning only within a specific context and that, in return, with the inclusion of every other particular element the context itself is reconfigured. And despite this interrelatedness, an analysis of the whole is not by itself enough to explain the part; neither can the part wholly express the general. The constant to-and-fro relationship between the parts and the whole; “the circular movement between the particular and the general” whose aim is to reach understanding is set as the “overarching framework” of hermeneutics: “The part/whole circle governs all interpretative activity insofar ‘as the whole is understood from the parts, so the parts can be understood from the whole.’”⁵⁶ As a result, understanding arises neither as the discovery of the relationships between the elements of an already given world, nor through participation in an unquestionable and universal reason, but as an “approximate meaning” that is produced precisely in the act of interpretation; as such it is a construction that will be the subject of deconstructions and reconstructions as long as the process of interpretation goes on.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Scheiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle (Missoula: Scholars, 1977), 196 quoted in Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 52.

Iser argues that hermeneutics could emerge as an important model of understanding only at a time when transcendental sources – either God or a universal reason – could no longer account for the complexities of the socio-political context: The qualitative changes in life have nullified the potential of any given framework that assimilates all the elements to its system, while at the same time resisting to the changes that can be brought about by these elements, to operate as the ground of meaning. As these transcendental authorities that needed neither justification nor explanation slowly faded away, the subject and the community emerged as the competing sources of meaning. The hermeneutic circle serves as a model that illuminates the bond this community forms with space and history as well as the mode of the relationship that is constituted between the members of the community.

All of these relations are marked by a “liminal distance” around which they revolve. The concept of liminal distance – which is central to hermeneutics – exhibits a close affinity to Benjamin’s notion of “aura” which constitutes the backbone of the mode of experience peculiar to the community. Both of these terms designate the excess of the particular, its resistance to being assimilated by the general. Confronted with this irreducible difference, the only thing interpretation can do is to try to minimize the gap through employing a reflective thought that strives to construct creative connections between the parts and the whole. In such a community, which is underwritten with the consciousness that a total understanding of the world can never be attained, neither history is perceived as a picture that yields itself readily to the viewpoints of the present world, nor lived space is reduced to conceived space, and nor individuals are exhausted by the norms of the society.

The “Decay of Experience” and the Subject of Non-places:

If the hermeneutic circle with the constant to-and-fro relationship it sustains between the particulars and the general served as the model of understanding in historical space whose subject was the community, then, it is no surprise that in abstract space, which is defined by the sovereignty of an objective ratio and the dissolution of the community, the hermeneutic circle has lost its context of application. Rather, in the increasingly abstracted public spaces, a vicious circle, which replaces the hermeneutic circle as the model of understanding, eliminates the “liminal distance” and subjugates the particular to the laws of an immobile code. The domination of the particular by the general signifies both the decay of the aura and the exclusion of “otherness” from the sphere of meaning. Consequently, the substitution of this mutual relationship by the hegemony of the code heralds the shrinking down of the space in which meaning is produced, that is, the loss of reflectivity.

In non-places, which are the main settings of the postindustrial world, meaning is not the outcome of a reflective thought which attempts to build bridges between the particular and its context – bridges that reconstitute both –, paths each of which provides just a possibility among other possibilities, but the product of a logic which detaches particulars from their present context and relocates them along an abstract plane, and then reconstitutes their interrelationships as well as their relation with the whole. If hermeneutics is an attempt at sustaining the relation between the parts and the whole through producing possible connections which all end up at an “approximate meaning”, just as Benjamin says in relation to the story (and the storyteller) that its main

reason is to give “counsel”, and that “counsel” is more a “proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding” than “an answer to a question”⁵⁷, then, it should be acknowledged that here the consciousness that guides these attempts, or propositions, the awareness that an exact answer cannot be obtained is as important as the attempt itself. This consciousness does not only mark the relationship between the particulars and the general, but also signifies the critical attitude of thought towards its own operations.

Defined by the absence of such a consciousness, the abstract logic that shapes understanding in non-places does not work towards the construction of crossroads that allow the coexistence of differences within a unifying context, but strives towards the production of a homogeneous social experience that renders the construction of such crossroads, or bridges, unnecessary. Differences are not totally excluded; but as I have indicated previously, they are “induced differences” which “remain within a set or system generated according to a particular law”⁵⁸. The exertion of this logic to space gives rise to an abstract space that is increasingly homogenized due to its total subjection to the laws of specific social structures (such as industrialization, commerce, and institutional power) but still fragmented, separated into pieces that no longer make up a unity.

In this abstract space, not only poverty, ethnic identity, and refugees are localized with the aims of both marginalizing and controlling, but also potentials; i.e. attempts at creating a different space, are confined to the limits of a prescribed area so that their interaction with the overall space is blocked and in time they lose their identities. In the same vein, non-places, as the

⁵⁷ Walter Benjamin, “Storyteller,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hanna Arendt (London: Fontana Books, 1973), 86.

⁵⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 372.

extreme instances of abstract space, are partly defined by the overabundance of messages, signs, and images. Yet these are not the joint products of representations of space and representational spaces, but the by-products of an abstract code. Therefore, despite the appearance they present of a multitude and diversity, in actuality, they function as the tools of this code that swallows up particularities.

To the extent that such a logic is employed in the production process of space, it also affects the urban experiences of the “users”; that is, the relation they form in and through space with history, with others, and with themselves. Non-places “do not integrate the earlier places: instead they are listed, classified, promoted to the status of ‘places of memory’, and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position”⁵⁹. The subjects of these places, which are in a sense banned from social use and which allow the mediation of only objective powers, are also the targets of this enlisting and categorization, that is, they are obliged to consent to abstract identities with predetermined qualities. Here, a formalized experience whose subjects are abstract categories is buttressed with an objective meaning that is produced outside the individuals.

The particularities of both events and individuals are erased by the totality; it is no longer the changing array of parts that constantly reconstitute the totality, which in turn contextualizes them. On the contrary now an abstracted code – which, despite its unified appearance and its “homogenizing tendency” includes the local within its operations – is what determines the character of the singularities. What it lost is the liminal space between the

⁵⁹ Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 78.

individual and the social structure in which she finds meaning. It can even be argued that in the postindustrial world, the individuals and the events are no longer the particularities that make up a whole; rather they are determined by an abstract totality/code that suspends or even eliminates their singularities and diminishes potentialities from the beginning. Rather, the particularities are now institutional regulations, rules set by the operations of the transnational capital, commercial treaties, legislations, etc.; which means that what now constitutes the whole, the parts, are either “concrete abstractions” (“including money, commodities, and the exchange of material goods”) or “‘pure’ forms” (such as “exchange, language, signs, equivalences, reciprocities, contracts, and so on”)⁶⁰; that is they are the perfect antithesis of the particular.

Augé argues that, besides other forms of excess, the supermodern situation is defined by the excess of the individual⁶¹: However, it should be taken into consideration that this excess does not so much refer to the difference-producing potentiality of the subject as to her isolation from a living social context. This isolation, which is to a large extent determined by the nature of the media that organizes both the flow of information in these places and the form of the communication with the passenger/customer, passes for her individuality; the detachment from the socio-cultural context creates the illusion of a self which furnishes her own identity whereas in actuality such a detachment represents the fact that the significance producing performance of the self is substituted with a one-way relationship (the domination of lived space by an immobilized code) that discards the contribution of the user. The space of the non-places is one “where the habitué of supermarkets, slot

⁶⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 81.

⁶¹ Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 36.

machines and credits cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary, the ephemeral.”⁶² In this world, the ‘I’ stands alone in the midst of a multiplicity of messages, images, and signs that present her back to her, yet this time articulated along the terms of an abstract logic.

A world of qualities without a man has arisen, of experiences without the person who experiences them, and it almost looks as though ideally private experience is a thing of the past [...]. *Probably the dissolution of the anthropocentric point of view which for such a long time considered man to be the center of the universe but which have been fading away since centuries, has finally arrived at the ‘I’ itself,* for the belief that the most important things about experience is the experiencing, or of action in the doing, is beginning to strike most people as naïve.⁶³

In non-places, the agency of the production of meaning shifts from the community to the media, the advertising and tourism agencies, which although do not take hold of space as a totality as institutional power needs to do, collaborate with these institutional loci of power in what has previously been named the “expropriation of experience” and the relevant a-humanization of meaning through flooding these emptied out spaces with the images and signs whose nature and interrelationship they control. These signs and images are qualitatively different from those that furnish the communal experience of “anthropological places” since instead of enabling the continuity of a spatial narrative that sustains unity while at the same time generating difference; they dismantle the narrative and transfer its elements onto an abstract plane. If the

⁶² Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 78.

⁶³ Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, vol. 1, trans. Sophie Wilkins (New York, 1996), 158-9 quoted in Martin Jay, “Lamenting the Crisis of Experience: Benjamin and Adorno,” in *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2006), 328-9.

first are the products of a lived space, then, the latter are the producers of “imaginary places”.

Hence, as Augé remarks, “certain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés.”⁶⁴ What is achieved through the intervention of these words is the absence of the place from itself: They detach the place (Tahiti and Marrakech are the examples that Augé gives) from its socio-political and historical context, dissimulate the power relations that have produced the place, and represent it only as an image. Tahiti, as the total sum of all the advertisements that mention it and the images that depict it, is not so different from a commodity that appears on the shop window. And it is even something *less* than a commodity because while the commodity still retains its use value; Tahiti, or for that matter all those places which are colonized by tourism, as it appears on the billboards and television screens, is solely meant for the gaze. It is only a surface that bears a multiplicity of signs, images, etc. that transmute it from a lived space into an imaginary one:

The ‘world of signs’ is not merely the space occupied by signs (by object-signs and sign-objects). It is also that space where the Ego no longer relates to its own nature, to the material world, or even to the ‘thingness’ of things (commodities), but only to things bound to their signs and indeed ousted and supplanted by them. The sign-bearing ‘I’ no longer deals with anything but other bearers of signs.⁶⁵

The commodification of places is intricately related with what Lefebvre describes as the manipulation of representational spaces by representations of space; that is, after the divorce between the two, as the representations of space

⁶⁴ Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 95.

⁶⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 311.

begin to gain ascendancy and determine the dominant forms, functions, and structure space will take – and, by implication, the corresponding mode of experience – those places which had for a long time reserved their representational quality are slowly subjected to the laws of conceived space. That is, those places which has been previously open to appropriation and imagination, and which has thus functioned as the loci of the creation of symbols and difference, are now given over to the abstract rules of industrialism and commodification.

This is the case in the Mediterranean coasts which, on the one hand, give the appearance of representational spaces due to the fact that they embody a lifestyle which is situated symbolically at the opposite pole of the mode of life produced through industrial work; yet, on the other hand, have direct relations with the “tour-operators, bankers, and entrepreneurs of places such as London and Hamburg”⁶⁶ which work hard to sustain this appearance. The signs of appropriation and imagination remain intact but the user of space is now deprived of the potential of appropriation. If previously meaning and symbols belonging to and emanating from a space had been the collective product of the community, or even of those people sharing life in a given place for a specific period of time, now these are substituted by the signs and images produced by the production companies, advertising and tourism agencies, which have replaced narration and memory as the mediators between the subject and space.

The existence of such a restraint on communal appropriation does not necessarily imply that every subject who uses these places will feel herself powerless and entrapped; unless, of course, what is at issue is a refugee

⁶⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 59.

literally imprisoned in a camp. On the contrary, the passenger/customer, depending on the level of luxury of the place, may even feel herself to be more “free” than ever. This is mostly because of the fact that the powers governing these abstract places are aware of the fact that they have to create the illusion that domination is not the sole mode of relationship sustained with space. The reality that within the conditions that have been produced by late capitalism space not only functions as the most general medium of exchange but that it has itself also been transformed into a commodity cannot be concealed from the user; within her daily practice the subject is well aware of the fact that even what she calls home is the exact copy of her neighbor’s; that, by virtue of urban planning and an architecture of abstraction houses have been transformed into identical cells.

A more recent step towards the rendering identical of each one of these private cells has been the entrance of a television into every household which subjects everyone to “...a mixture of images (news, advertising, and fiction) of which neither the presentation nor the purpose is identical, at least in principle, but which assemble before eyes a universe that is relatively *homogeneous in its diversity*.”⁶⁷. All of these factors indicate that even that place which had been the last refuge of the representational mode of relationship formed with space; i.e. home, has in the end surrendered to the logic of abstraction. What we call non-places are no longer restricted to the airports, highways, hotels, amusement parks or refugee camps. People now *pass* from even those places which they *dwell* in since they are no longer the real subjects of those places. Another example that demonstrates the hegemony of signs is the airport: The

⁶⁷Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 32.

airports are planned and constructed as empty surfaces with no curves, or squares that promote the meeting and interaction of people. Rather than spatial characteristics, it is the signs of capitalism that determine the meeting places of the passengers. People meet in Starbucks not because it is designed as an attractive place, but because they have no other choice. In spatial terms, Starbucks has no specificity; there pertains no spatial quality to it that distinguishes it from the rest of the place.

In both of these examples we witness the two apparent steps that work towards the abstraction of space; the first is the emptying out of space in accordance with the dominant conception of space that represents it as an empty medium (the geometric formant), and the second is the flooding of this empty space which is rendered indifferent to the particularity of every individual, act, and event with a multitude of signs, images, and messages (the visual formant).⁶⁸ All former meanings, signification systems, are evacuated from this space, but still it is not an empty space. Alienation has no counterpart in the postindustrial world. On the contrary, the closing of the hermeneutic circle and the shift from a society that is unified in its diversity to one that is “homogeneous in its diversity” signify the end of all alienation. As the “liminal space” between the particular and the general erodes, every word, act, or event is pinned to a definite meaning that leaves no space for ambiguity. And the function of the signs and images, which do the pinning, is to enable the subjects to “misrecognize” – but still recognize – themselves on this abstract plane.

⁶⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 285-6.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have tried to explore, on the one hand, how non-places, the settings of the post-industrial world, affect and reconstruct subjective experience, and, on the other hand; how subjective experience reproduces itself in and through the organization of that space. As I have indicated in the introductory chapter, I did not discuss the mode of subjective experience of abstract space as a detached phenomenon, but tried to analyze it within the context of a more general experience of the post-industrial world; a world which has been becoming more and more automatized since the process of the transfer of agency from subjects and communities to objective powers has begun. By this transfer of agency I mean the exclusion of the subject as an agent from the production process of her own experience; the fixing of selves – as well as things – to identities specified by a variety of discursive and non-discursive practices and the consequent deprivation of the potential of both being able to produce difference and being open to change. This transfer of agency, which is explicitly observable in the workings of modern science which redefine the form of the relationship between the object and the subject, in the increasingly complicated machines of post-industrialism which reduce the worker to a finger who pushes the button, resurfaces in the organization of urban space in multifarious forms.

Under urbanization, space becomes increasingly automated. With the introduction of complex mechanisms of transportation, the urban systems that distribute electricity, water and similar needs it becomes an objective force that organizes, uses, and reproduces energy. This huge machine, which has been made possible by the materialization in space of vast amounts of accumulation of knowledge – technology – is superimposed by a whole set of representations deriving from various discourses which organize our ways of being/thinking/acting as citizens in the urban realm. This much of expropriation of spatial experience had already been realized in the modern city and this structure is still a significant layer that determines the conditions of living in the city. However, with the introduction of the non-places our mode of being-in-the-urban realm is rendered even more abstract. The modern city had already located the subjects on an abstract plane in which they had been redefined according to the terms and rules of the state, transnational capital, commerce, law, etc. Non-places subject space to a second process of abstraction by distributing all over it the latest products of the representations of space such as high-tech devices, signs and images. It seems as if as we pass through these places, which are already meant for passing through, we also pass through a process of identity construction. We lend our selves, our identities interwoven with stories, symbols, and memories which we had brought from our pasts to this supposedly depthless surface which detaches us from the context of ourselves, deprives us of our qualities, transfigures us according to its own conceptions, and represents us back to us.

It should be taken into consideration that the term non-place does not simply designate places with definitive characteristics such as the airports,

shopping malls, or highways. It also designates a historically specific mode of organizing space which has consequences for the ways we experience space; relate to ourselves, others, and things in space. In this thesis, I have tried to explore the conditions that made such an abstract organization possible and the consequences of such a space for subjective experience. It can be said that as I traced my way from the historical space of the early modernity to the abstract space of ultra-modernity the Benjaminian notion of experience (Erfahrung) began to leave its way slowly to another mode of experience; which has more in common with Foucault's notion of experience. Meaning that, the mode of subjective experience in which the subject and the thing related to each other through the mediation of imagination, narratives, and symbols and in this way constantly transgressed their limits left its way to a mode of experience in which mutual interaction is eliminated due to the fact that both the self and the thing have been objectified and confined into clear-cut categories and positions; that they have turned into the effects of objective structures that constitute experience in their names.

In searching out the conditions that made this transformation possible, I, first of all, dwelled into the notion of time. In the chapter named "Spatio-Temporal Perception" I introduced time and space as two interwoven and indispensable grounds of experience. I have proceeded with the basic assumption that time is always already inherent in space; that it is time which renders space livable. And, in return, space plays an important role in the organization of time. With reference to Lefebvre I have suggested that the major changes inflicted upon space affect the way time is conceptualized and experienced. As the impact of the objective forces intensifies under modernity,

time slowly loses its ability to transform space from a lifeless texture into a living context. The dominant loci of power under modernity, such as the state, industrialism, and capitalism attempt to seize control over space, to create their own space which is infused with their representations and conceptualizations, which puts to use their means for reaching their designated ends. The end product is abstract space which functions as a tool in re-conceptualizing time in accordance with the laws and aims of these loci of power. As the desire for endless accumulation becomes a rule under capitalism, time is reduced to a source of profit. The highly advanced transportation systems, modern-machinery operating in factories and on the land ... all of these are meant for extracting, or at least saving, as much money as possible out of time, for maximizing productivity by speeding up time. Moreover the factor of speed does not remain limited within the sphere of production. Instead, it becomes an element of the everyday life. Due to the overabundance of stimuli, we react to everything in the urban realm with the same speed. Speed turns into an even more influential element in the way we perceive and experience space in the non-places such as the airports. No significance is attached to any one of those messages, signs, and images that flood these places; they just indifferently fill in identical moments. And this breaking up of time into disconnected and repetitive moments results in the perception of space as a collage that cannot make up either a context or a narrative.

In this sense the shrinkage of time has consequences also for the decay of representational spaces; which is one of the subjects of the following chapter – “The Actualization of Representations of Space” – in which I first of all categorically separated representations of space from the representational

spaces and then tried to analyze the process by which representations of space achieve almost total domination over representational spaces within the conditions of abstract space. And I lastly mentioned the consequences of this domination for subjective experience. To repeat, “representations of space” refer to “the dominant conception of space within a specific historical period which arises out of the collaboration between knowledge and power”⁶⁹. The most prevalent representations of space in the post-industrial world portray space as a homogeneous entity, as an empty container that accepts whatever is put in it, as the product of a vision, etc. in conformity with the uses the state, transnational capital, the military power and other forms of effective power want to make out of space. The tools of these representations are all the plans and projects of urban designers and architects, maps and sketches, images emanating from the billboards and screens, and messages and signs which reconstitute the users’ relationship with space along the terms of an abstract thought. In other words, these products of representations carry down this abstract thought embedded in the representations to the realm of everyday life; they turn it into something that can be practiced and reproduced everyday by the inhabitants.

On the other hand, the term “representational spaces” designates “the space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects.”⁷⁰ In this sense, representational spaces are nourished by the memories of the users and the narratives through which they connect to each other and to the place. It is the quality of the time they spend in that place which endows the place with

⁶⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 18.

⁷⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 39.

significance; it is the diverse histories they constantly embed in this place which transforms the place into the bedrock of experience. And it is because of this elemental dependence of representational spaces on history that the strategies of the representations of space – the reduction of time to the total sum of disconnected moments, speed of life which presents the world as something to be immediately reacted to rather than reflected upon – constitute such a serious threat to their existence. Representations reduce a process of becoming stretched out in time to a static presence; and in this way they seek to unite and control the center and the periphery, the local, the national, and the transnational under the same abstract logic which is represented as the reflection of an essential truth. The projections of the representations aim to abolish difference; the city may be fragmented into multiple parts according to functions, the places of work may be strictly detached from those of leisure, and so on. But overall, all these separated zones are organized according to the same rules. On the other hand, the representational spaces are the local responses to the homogenizing tendencies of the representations of space; through the memories and narratives that connect inhabitants to each other and to their space, the concreteness and particularity of the space is sustained.

As space becomes increasingly abstracted and falls prey to the laws of reproducibility, repetition, and homogenization these historical mediators between space and its inhabitants start to fade away. Imagination, symbols, and memory, in their attempt to reach out to the object of experience, preserve the distance of the thing. Meaning that, these modes of relating to the thing acknowledge, and do not attempt to violate, the aura of the thing. This is the distance needed for reflecting on the thing, for contemplating it, being open to

its particularity and eventually forming a meaningful narrative out the relation engaged with it. The annihilation of this distance implies by itself the “decay of experience” in the Benjaminian sense. The chains of signs, messages, and images which replace memories and narratives in abstract space destroy this “unique distance” which indicates the annihilation of a process of mutual transformation between the subject and the object and the possibility of producing difference. In this abstract space, the signs, and images of institutional law, transnational capital, state power, etc. transfigure places as static entities with pre-determined identities and functions.

Lastly, in chapter “The Closure of the Hermeneutic Circle” I tried to analyze the cognitive consequences of this “decay of experience”. Here, I focused more on the objectification that people and things are subjected to and the consequent loss of agency on their part in the production of both experience and meaning. In non-places, experience is rather produced by objective forces which have at their hand image/sign-producing sectors such as advertisement and tourism and it is only after the production of this external experience that things and people are drawn into this abstract sphere and attributed specified roles and identities. The plans, sketches, designs, and all other images protruding one after another from the screens and billboards fabricate a character for the passenger; they determine the possibilities she has, the appearance she takes on, her desires, her mode of relating with herself, others, things and history. In short, these images, signs, and messages work towards the identification of the subject with the “average citizen” of an abstract code.

I argued that in this objectified reality, it is neither the subjects nor the relations they form with space and things in space that produces meaning.

Rather in the abstracted places of the post-industrial world, the sole source of meaning is this abstract code. In order to open up this argument, I traced my way from the “code of space” – that is, “a unifying practice and a language adequate to that practice”⁷¹ peculiar to a specific time, space, and a community – to the totalizing and homogenizing code prevailing in abstract space. I suggested that in the early modern town where abstraction had not yet made its apogee meaning was produced out of the interaction between representational spaces and representations of space. Meaning that, here, the representations provided the general framework which the community worked upon to render concrete. There existed a signification system common to the whole community, yet, on the other hand, members of this community could participate individually in the constitution of this meaning system through sharing her particularity with it. This was also valid for the urban realm itself; despite the existence of a common code which determined the overall organization of the city, every new piece of architecture could transform the whole. Therefore I suggested that the hermeneutical circle, which is method of weaving paths and crossroads between the particular and the general in order to reach at an approximate meaning, could serve as a model for both the production of meaning and understanding in this society. However, the same is not true for the post-industrial world and its abstract space. In the present world, meaning is automatized. An abstract code assimilates all particularities to itself and presents prescriptions of meaning. In this context, no particularity retains to a single building since it echoes the law of the abstract code and in this sense a repetition of all the other buildings. Neither do people need to

⁷¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 42.

indulge in a constant search for meaning, to be involved in a permanent process of translation in their attempts to produce meaning out of the world since the connections that need to be drawn between things, the meaning they need to derive is already given to them through the operations of signs and images.

Overall, it can be said that this thesis has stayed at the level of an exploration; that, it has been an attempt at understanding the objective forces that shape our identities and define our relationships in ultra-modernity. I have laid out a general picture which portrays our distance from being the subjects of our own experience and in this sense our lack of freedom as long as what we call freedom resides in the possibilities of becoming something other than oneself through a transforming and transformative relationship formed with the world. It seemed important to me to search for the sources of our absence from ourselves as the subjects of our own experience in the organization of abstract space. Not because I thought this abstract space and its code to be the sole power that generates our lack of agency. But, because I think that our space – together with time – is one of the few things that we are so eager to accept as “given”. The various constructions and strategies the dominant power relations put to operation in this space call for an analysis so that this taken for granted space can be stripped off its illusionary transparency. Such a task exceeded the limits of this thesis, but I think it should be dealt with as the object of a more comprehensive study. Such a study could also explore methods and models for understanding this abstract code according to the rules of which space and life is organized. In this thesis I could only make the observation that the hermeneutical circle as a model of understanding had lost its validity in the

post-industrial world, but I could not propose another model for decoding the operations of the reigning abstract code.

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