

“NON-PLACE” UNDER THE DOMINATION OF CONTROL MECHANISMS ¹

KONTROL MEKANİZMALARININ EGEMENLİĞİNDE “YOK-YER”

Sebla ARIN

Ph.D. (M.Arch), Bursa, TURKEY

Öz: Bu çalışma “yok-yer” kavramı ve bu kavramın somutlaştırıldığı mekânlar, “yok-yer” algısının kullanıcıya bağlı özneliliği üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda “yok-yer” olgusunun gelişmesine neden olan sosyal ve kavramsal faktörlere yönelik teorik altyapının oluşturulmasının ardından, kontrol mekanizmaları aracılığıyla biçimlenen somut “yok-yer” örnekleri ele alınacaktır. Söz konusu örneklerin oluşumu, içinde bulunan bireyin konumu ve bunları takiben “yok-yer” kavramı üzerine geliştirilen farklı bakış açıları irdelenecektir. Son olarak “yok-yer”de ortaya çıkan kontrol mekanizmalarına ilişkin bireysel algı ve karşı durma biçimleri; kişinin mekân algısında “yok-yer”i “yer”e dönüştüren dinamikler tartışmaya açılacaktır. Kontrol mekanizmalarının “yok-yer”deki kaçınılmaz varlığı ve bu durumun söz konusu kavramın anlamsal sürekliliği üzerindeki etkisinin yanı sıra, “yer” ve “yok-yer” arasındaki kullanıcının mekân içerisindeki rolünün belirleyici olduğu kaygan zemin ortaya konulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yok-Yer, Yersizlik, Kontrol Mekanizmaları, Bireysel Algı

Abstract: This study focuses on the concept of “non-place”, embodiment of this notion and subjectivity of it depending on the user. A literature review on social and conceptual factors which prepared the rise of “non-place” will be followed by concrete examples of non-place generated through control mechanisms. The formation of non-places and the position of the individual existing in them will be examined. Afterwards various interpretations on the notion of non-place will be discussed. Finally the individual perceptions and the counteractions against the control mechanisms of non-place; and also the dynamics affecting the individual’s tendency to convert “non-place” into “place” will be brought into question. The inevitable existence of control mechanisms in “non-place” and the effects of this situation on the semantic sustainability of the concept will be presented along with the slippery ground between “place” and “non-place” in which the role of the user is the determinant force.

Key Words: Non-Place, Placelessness, Control Mechanisms, Individual Perception

Doi: 10.17365/TMD.2017.1.010.x

(1) *Sorumlu Yazar: Sebla ARIN, Serbest Mimar, seblaarin@gmail.com Geliş Tarihi / Received: 17.09.2016 Düzeltme Tarihi / Revision Date: 13.01.2017-04.02.2017 Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 20.02.2017 Makalenin Türü: Type of article (Araştırma – Uygulama / Research - Application) Çıkar Çatışması / Conflict of Interest: Yok / None “Etik Kurul Raporu Yok – None of Ethics Commit*



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ULUSLARARASI HAKEMLİ TASARIM VE MİMARLIK DERGİSİ

Ocak / Şubat / Mart / Nisan 2017 Sayı: 10 Kış - İlkbahar

INTERNATIONAL REFEREED JOURNAL OF DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

January / February / March / April 2017 Issue: 10 Winter – Spring

ID:119 K:197

ISSN Print: 2148-8142 Online: 2148-4880

(ISO 18001-OH-0090-13001706 / ISO 14001-EM-0090-13001706 / ISO 9001-QM-0090-13001706 / ISO 10002-CM-0090-13001706)

(Marka Patent No / Trademark)

(2015/04018 – 2015/GE/17595)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of architecture “place” has been defined in various ways. According to Norberg-Schulz (1980: 6), “*the existential purpose of building is to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment.*” He defines place as “*the space where life occurs*”. Relph (1976: 4-7) explains place as some part of the environment that has been claimed by feelings. According to the phenomenological approach, place cannot be assumed as a point on the linear schema. It embraces the past, the present and the future potentials of the space. Bachelard claims that a place has to be loved in the first place in case there is an intention to make phenomenology of it. Place is the way of “*being-in-the-world*” as Heidegger has mentioned.

Space has been considered to be absolute and unlimited till the beginning of philosophy whereas place is limited, particular and local. As cited in Özmetin (2008: 136), the space becomes a place with the “*attachment of meaning*”, because “*this meaning makes place belong to us*” as there has to be a relationship between person & place. In the relationship of the person and the place; the space evaluates into “place” slowly through experiences and the expectations for the future. Place is the mediator between object and subject. This point of view can be supported by Augé’s (1995:

102) definition by which he propounded that “*there has to be some recurrent encounters establishing in our minds through complex integrations for a space to become a place*”.

The consumption culture which is consequential to capitalism has created its spaces which were real but cannot be sensed as the places that the individual used to relate with. These spaces were different from the places and had diverse qualities. This revealed a need to name them with a new terminology. By this way the term “non-place” came into use.

In the scope of this paper, first of all the notions related with “non-place” will be examined based on the Augé’s description of the term. Different perspectives on the subject and various qualities of “non-place” will also be examined. Meanwhile the factors effecting the change in the perception of place and non-place will also be considered. Depending on some of its qualities, non-place might be the stage of control mechanisms on some occasions. Thus, the attempts of the users’ to make sense of these non-places, due to their personal experiences in them, might change their nature. The embodiment of control mechanisms and their use of non-places will be examined in this sense. Their potential of transforming the existential qualities of non-places is another matter of discussion.



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FORMATIVE NOTIONS of the CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK of NON- PLACE

The term “non-place” was first cited by Webber (1964: 79) in “Urban Place and the Non-Place Urban Realm”. He used this term in order to define a new era in which accessibility is much more important than “propinquity”. This was seen as liberation from the ties of traditional place.

Augé (1995: 77-78) emphasizes that “*if a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then the space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. ...Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed*”. The properties that Augé determines in order to explain “non-place” can be listed as follows:

- Non-places are the spaces which a person cannot settle a relationship with. It is the space of alienation of the person both to society and to himself.
- An individual does not live in non-places but just passes through it. They are devoted to temporary activities. The time that the individual stays at a non-place is limited with the time needed for the activity that should occur there. During this temporal
- relation, the user is just a member of the mass. He is not the “one” that he becomes in his relationship with the place. This is the reason why non-place cannot be internalized. The difference of the place and non-place is that the individual does not stay long enough at a non-place to grow feelings for it.
- There is a purpose, an object to be realized in non-place. Because of this there is a contract between the non-place and the individual and everything happens in the scope of this contract.
- The special activity which is happening in non-place is directed by written instructions. The individual is guided what to do, where to go by those signs.
- There is no need for human contact in a non-place because everything has been settled and programmed by specific schedules. So, the individual might stay alone in the crowd without any need to say a word during his time in non-place. In this respect it can be said that non-places are the spaces of solitude.
- Being a member of supermodern society, anyone can find his way or subconsciously know what to do in a non-place regardless of his nationality, because non-place is a nationless, global form. Non-place is the space of anonymity. (Augé says that “*The*



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(Marka Patent No / Trademark)

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space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude”). This might be the reason why a stranger might feel at home existing in a non-place in a foreign country.

- The entrance to a non-place is under control. Anyone has to prove that he is innocent or equipped with the required qualities in order to enter there.
- Anyone who exists in a non-place is role-playing. He is expected to act according to the necessities of his role which specifies his aim of being there. This feature of non-place resembles Sartre’s “waiter” example. From Sartre’s point of view the whole world is a theatre stage and everyone is acting his role. But indeed there is no need to “be” that role-person at all (Akarsu, 1994: 225-234). A waiter knows how to seem like a waiter and acts according to this model during his working hours. But when he puts away his costume and exits the restaurant he leaves his role and impersonates a new role as a father, or a son, or a student, or a driver, and so on. Like the waiter of Sartre, an individual enters a non-place with the expectations of the society on his shoulders, and without thinking much about it he acts according to those templates.

Emphasizing the properties discussed in the former chapter, Augé mentions some spaces of capitalist supermodernity as non-places. These are: Motorways, airports, railway stations, shopping malls, supermarkets, hotel chains, large retail outlets, leisure parks, and so on. In order to enlarge the number of these examples and investigate if these examples fulfill the properties above or if they can be criticized from different perspectives, some interconnected concepts that are cherishing and related to the notion of “non-place” will be examined in this section.

Supermodernity

Augé (1995: 24-41) uses the term of “supermodernity” in order to refer to the current situation. Instead of using “postmodernity” which is recalling an end, he prefers to call this present era as “supermodernity” which has many differences from modernity, but not a completely separated time-zone, more likely a transformation of modernity which is qualified by the excesses of some values. Those are:

- Excess of Time: With the developments in the digital technology the number of the events that are accessible increased enormously and every individual of the supermodern society is responsible of having information about all of those. This is a kind of “acceleration of history”, and in-



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versely proportional to this velocity, the importance of every single event is being decreased. No one has a chance to concentrate on thinking about a thing as far as a new one is coming immediately. As a result of this situation everything loses its meaning.

- Excess of Space: Our planet is not the only “home” for the human race any more. Extraterrestrial travel is possible now. With the new means of travel, it is not a big issue to have three different meals in three different cities on the same day. There is a huge distortion of scale in the current era which affects the spatial perceptions. Arefi (1999: 179-183), being influenced by Trancik’s and Newman’s thoughts, explains this situation as *“the prevalence of accessibility over proximity has created an imbalance in the urban setting; the disruption of place-based communities accompanied by the loss of meaning and physical as well as historical connectivity, proliferation of indefensible and lost spaces and the loss of sense of place.”*
- Excess of Individuality: The capitalist system limits the collective life and creates an environment where the person is working on his own, following her/his daily routine alone and this circumstance makes the individual become self-sufficient. This situation cherishes her/his self-ego

causing an individualization and solitude. Gamet & Cova (1999: 37-45) claim that the modern community is the reason of this solitude. The inventions like washing machine, TV, fax, tumble dryer replaced the places that constitute social interaction such as wash-house, cinema, mail, washing lines between houses.

Placelessness

Another term which is important in identifying “non-place” is placelessness. The loss of place which is caused by the excesses of supermodernity brought the sense of placelessness. Edward Relph (1976: 45) claims that placelessness comprises look-alike landscapes which are the result of increasing mobility and imitation in his book entitled “Place and Placelessness”. This is not a sudden constitution, but rather there has always been such kind of a phenomenon which became widespread in due course.

Inauthenticity that is a result of mass production and industrialization is one of the main attitudes that constitute the feeling of placelessness. The individual started to find his value in possessing the goods applauded by the society. The capitalist system paradoxically makes people believe that they will become unique if they buy, they become or they behave on the route of popular (Buchanan, 1999: 393-398).



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The meaning of “home” is changed by im-mobile communities. There is a new working class in the modern society. We cannot talk about life-long stable professions. People are more likely to have “project-based” occupations. This might be related to the rise of “creative class” that Florida (2004: 1-17) has mentioned. According to this point of view, as the machinery has taken the work load from people, creativity and brain-work became superior to body power. The digital technologies make it possible to reach and sell ideas to the other side of the planet and this opened the way to delocalize and settle down in different places for the span of the project. Pallasmaa (2008: 144-156) calls this situation as “existential nomadism” which is an experience of life itself in constant transition without roots and domicile. This prevents the individual from having a sensible relationship with the place where s/he lives, to nourish the feeling of belonging and causes the individual to lose the sense of home. This loss has started with the modernist inclination of seeing the dwelling as a machine to live in according to Relph (1976: 140).

Placelessness which can also be seen as the weakening of identity of place is encouraged by media that includes mass communication, mass culture, big business, powerful central authority and the economic system (Relph, 1976: 64).

Deterritorialization

Deterritorialization is not an issue of demolishing territory, but it is the change in the relation between the individual & place (Ekincioglu, 1996: 88-93). It is a process in which the individual is alienated from her/his environment. It is about breaking the connections with the nation, the city, the identity and it ruptures the commitment to the land, family and territory. It is the feeling of “not belonging to anywhere”, being in-between. In this respect it is highly related to mobility. But this mobility is not an issue of only a privileged mobile high class, but also a reality of the whole community. For example the seasonal workers are also affected from mobility.

Deterritorialization should not be understood as a demolition. In this respect it is similar to the concept of deconstruction it is more like gaining a new perspective. According to Derrida (1978: 1-35) deconstruction is criticizing the contradictions, turning inside out, unraveling the text so as to bring out all of the possible meanings which have already been there. Derrida believes in deconstructing all contradictions that have been protected, as if ripping out knitting.

Meanwhile, Deleuze & Guattari explain deterritorialization as a chance to get rid of dilapidated structures and claim that it is always followed by reterritorialization which is



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putting new concepts in the place of the old ones (Koçyiğit, 2012: 98-113). This might be interpreted as liberation and in this respect Capitalism can be considered to be the most opened and the most closed period to deterritorialization. Because Capitalism seems to be promoting the increase of the new, but this is always a “new” rising on the base of exchange principle (Colebrook, 2009: 82-99).

Another interpretation about deterritorialization is that it is the loss of the natural ties between the every-day life culture and the geographical & social ground (Tomlinson, 2004: 147-204). In other words, deterritorialization is not the end of local, but the transformation of the local into a complicated cultural space.

Depending on all of these ideas, the concept of “deterritorialization” might be explained as not belonging to anywhere, but everywhere.

Digital Age

Another notion related with non-place is the digital age which has been shown as the cause disappearance of the borders, making any place or any event accessible. But beyond these characteristics, it brought new expansions of space. Kaçmaz (2004: 8) specifies these digitally supported spaces as cyberspace, hyperspace and exospace and signifies all of them as “*the other of architecture*”. They all have spatial qualities but cannot be considered to be architectural spaces as nobody

really lives in them. Cyberspace is the intangible world of digital information that can be accessed through the Internet. Hyperspace is created where the user observes reactions to his movements in real-time as a result of his physical connection to the computer by some tools. Exospace is a digitally supported extraterrestrial space. Kaçmaz (2004: 42) argues that industrial revolution has given architects the concept of space whereas digital revolution its opposite. These non-architecturally spatial entities cause decentralization and so that the power is non-localized. Hence this situation brings mobility.

Coyne (2007: 26-38) compares virtual reality and non-places and emphasises some similarities between them. He argues that whereas rich, meaningful or just everyday places are cognitively enabling and facilitate thinking; non-places and spaces of virtual reality do not evoke the individual to think. In both of them the person is instructed by some commands, therefore they become cognitively deficient spaces. There is no need for personal thought in them. Even though virtual reality has the potential of being cognitively very rich, it generally serves like a container of cognition. Cognition does not attend to its material fabric. Virtual reality is generally criticized by missing out on the subtleties of spatiality that enable thought to take place. Non-place and virtual reality resemble in this aspect, they



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both cannot use the potentials of becoming a place. Another resemblance is the feeling of detachment, social dislocation and placelessness they nourish.

THE CONTROL MECHANISMS in NON-PLACE

Throughout Modernity the power mechanisms tried to find an effective way of keeping the masses under pressure. The aim of this discipline mechanism is to achieve the normalization of the members of the community. After the Industrial Revolution, in order to keep the system going, the ruling classes tried to keep other classes that are inclined to revolt under control by social discipline and alignment. In this system the object lost his individual importance and became a harmonious member which is necessary for the survival of the system. According to Foucault, the power is everywhere and nowhere in modern liberal communities (Touraine, 2010: 210-220). There are micro-centers which are the reflections of power and when they come together they form the system. These disciplinary societies are depending on watching and punishment. The ideal form of this conceptual basis is Bentham's panopticon according to Foucault (Gutting, 2010: 117-137). This form, which is simply a watching tower in the center surrounded by cells housing individuals, was first used for prison design. Later this principal became popular in many con-

rol spaces such as military schools, hospitals, mental institutions, university campuses, and so on briefly in every space where the control over a group is in question. The main issue about the panopticon is not literally being watched, but the potential of being watched and punished.

Non-places can be assumed as panopticons as being spaces of control. The entrance to a non-place is under a contract. The user needs to have a ticket to enter an airport or highway, there has to be a reservation to stay in a hotel or holiday village, s/he has to be detected first in order to enter a shopping-mall. The control mechanism keeps on going also inside the non-place by digital technologies. There are many cameras watching whatever is done. Nobody might know if s/he is simultaneously being watched from a control room, but the potential of being watched keeps her/him away from doing anything opposing to the contract. S/he can exactly be sure that s/he will be punished in case of breaking the speed-limit in a high-way, stealing or doing anything inconvenient in a shopping mall or carrying any forbidden stuff at an airport. What is expected from an individual in a non-place is to obey according to her/his "role", just as being a regretful prisoner, obedient patient, good student, loyal soldier in a panopticon. S/he would be dismissed or punished if s/he dares to go beyond these expectations.

Therefore, non-place is designed as a reflection of a panopticon in order to strengthen the role-play. Its architecture is shaped to enforce the assimilation on the object by the power mechanism.

EMBODIMENT of NON-PLACE

Being affected by the formations of the capitalist system which are explained above, non-places confront us in many fields. The spaces of mobility, tourism and leisure are some examples of these fields. Holiday villages are good examples of non-place. The individual stays there during a definite time stated on the contract and everything he will do in the holiday village depends on the time-schedule. When s/he will have his meals or attend to animation shows are all arranged. There are instructive signs showing where to go, what are inhabited to do in the borders of the village. Relph (1976: 145) claims that tourism is not about experiencing but it is about collecting. The tourist does not have the option to choose anymore. As a result of the package tours the places that s/he will stay or visit are decided by another authority.

Tanyeli (2004: 74-77) interprets this situation as the tourist becoming statistical rather than being the object. The individual does not experience or internalize the places that s/he is visiting anymore. The aim became to put maximum number of ticks on the tourist guide-

book in the limited tour-time as if s/he is in a race. The architecture of holiday-village as a non-place is also standardized.



Photo 1. Holiday Village Routine

Relph (1976: 80) states that Harrison framed “the modern mania is carrying our life style where we go instead of accepting the one that we find on the spot” in 1887. After more than a century this inclination didn’t change, even more exaggerated. Touristic places are designed in order to create an illusion. According to Korstanje (2009:105) modern tourism represents a tendency oriented to create a false-consciousness of otherness. Architecture of the holiday village is shaped to satisfy the tourist’s expectations, but not to reflect the local values. They are designed like a movie set fitting to the “local image” or “paradise image” in the tourist’s mind so that s/he can consume as much as possible in a limited time. In this respect holiday villages of mass tourism are fake places which can never get historicized but get older like all other non-places.

This is a kind of “Disneyfication” which can be observed in theme parks, miniature cities like Miniaturk which are also examples of non-place. The history becomes a part of the spectacle in them. The scale factor is totally distorted and the connection between architecture and body is turned upside down. By the loss of spatial perception, being out of context, being a platform of control these places carry the characteristics of non-place.



Photo 2. Miniaturk

Even though Augé was not the first one to mention non-place, this term became a matter of debate widely after the publication of his book “*Non-Lieux, Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*” in 1992 (It was translated into English as “*Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*” in 1995). There were and still are many followers and supporters of him, besides the opponents of his ideas. One of these opponents is Merriman (2004: 145-167) who criticizes Augé on overstating the

novelty and difference of place and failing to acknowledge the heterogeneity and materiality of the social networks. He also states that “non-place” is not such a new concept as Augé suggests by linking the term to supermodernity. He argues that the disconnection of the traveler from the place because of the velocity and rapid movements of the scenery dates back to 19th century when the railway travel started to disorient the individual. According to Merriman claiming that people do not have any sensual relationship with non-place is also not correct. Because the feelings like boredom, isolation and detachment are also spatial experiences that cannot be dismissed from human experience.

Another criticism on non-place is whether there is a possibility of the existence of an absolute non-place. In other words, whether the opposition of place and non-place can be interpreted as a subject of Cartesian dualism or not. Actually, these dualities depend on each other to exist. The meaning of each term is established through its relationship with the other. They cannot be thought as two independent notions. Augé (1995: 75-116) also acknowledges that “*In the concrete reality of today’s world, places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never absent from anyplace*”. But the opposite is also va-

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lid. There is a potential of becoming a place in every non-place.

The interchangeability of place and non-place is related to the main criticism that is made about non-place. The concept of non-place totally depends on personal perspective of the individual (Seamon & Sowers, 2008: 43-51; Tomlinson, 2004: 147-204; Merriman, 2004: 145-167). A driver passing by a highway or a shopper spending few hours in a shopping-mall, a vacationer in the holiday village, a customer in the supermarket might not feel himself attached to the space and perceive it as a non-place; but what if the individual is a lorry-driver spending most of his life on the roads or a sales clerk in a shop, an animator in the holiday village, a cashier in the supermarket? Can any of those stay detached from the space in this condition? The non-place of the passer-by becomes the place for the permanent worker in it. Indeed the individual does not need to be a worker in order to feel attached. It is about personality and feeling as an insider or outsider. Under some conditions the individual might not feel attached even to his home or country, the most accepted forms of place. For example, if he is a victim of family violence in his house or he is forced to live stateless because of a life-danger in his country he might see them as non-places. In case of such a danger, an embraced place suddenly becomes a non-place.

The human-being has a tendency to create “place” and give a meaning to it. As Pallasmaa (2008: 144-156) quotes from Weil, “*To be rooted is perhaps the most important need of the human soul*”, there are many examples of personal initiative in turning a non-place to place. Foucault believes that the outsiders and drop-outs are the potential opponents in the normalization society. The “self-technology” that the object creates against the domination and control mechanism has the aim of liberation and gaining autonomy. The protagonist Viktor Navorski in the movie “*The Terminal*” (2004) is an extreme example of converting a non-place into a place. But it is not an extraordinary situation to see people making up their own places by using their belongings, setting their territory in the case of long delays at airports. Also if the object is a constant traveler, the usual bus-stop or terminal might not feel as a non-place.



Photo 3. “The Terminal” Movie, 2004. ¹

¹ (<http://www.reelingreviews.com/theterminal.htm>)



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Ocak / Şubat / Mart / Nisan 2017 Sayı: 10 Kış - İlkbahar

INTERNATIONAL REFEREED JOURNAL OF DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

January / February / March / April 2017 Issue: 10 Winter – Spring

ID:119 K:197

ISSN Print: 2148-8142 Online: 2148-4880

(ISO 18001-OH-0090-13001706 / ISO 14001-EM-0090-13001706 / ISO 9001-QM-0090-13001706 / ISO 10002-CM-0090-13001706)

(Marka Patent No / Trademark)

(2015/04018 – 2015/GE/17595)

The opponent soul of the human-being is the reason of the revolt against the control mechanism which is set up by the authority. Members of the society sometimes reject the roles that were given to them by the contract of the non-place and risking to be punished, they choose to play a different role that might not be seem proper for the non-place by the majority. They find a marginal way to convert the non-place into place. Being examples of non-place from Augé's point of view, service areas become places for hitch-hikers, "business" travelers, terrorists, guide-book writers and architectural commentators. Also in terms of a strike, funeral cortège, site protest, the motor-way becomes a place for the group (Merriman, 2004: 150). Another example of bringing place identity to a non-place is the case of "Minibar" that Altay (2004: 65-69) mentions. This is a protesting attitude of the university youth in Ankara. They broke the settled rules of non-place according to their own choices and convert the non-place (the garden walls or stairs of an apartment block, side streets) into a socializing place. When the forces of authority remind them the rules and threaten them by punishment, they defend their place and revolt against control by converting another non-place into place. A similar situation can be observed in shopping-malls, too. They are not only spaces of shopping but also socializing where peop-

le settle relationships with the others and the environment.

CONCLUSION

The concept of non-place is a product of consumption society. As the disciplinary mechanisms are the main fuel of the system, the micro-centered authoritarian power uses non-place as a tool of control. By making the individual believe that s/he is unique, in reality the system makes the individual assimilated and plays the role found suitable to become an obedient citizen. But as the sense of place is very experiential and intimate; the sense of non-place is also that way. Even though there is a huge scaffolding of the authority to detach and dislocate the individual from space in order to keep her/him under control, at the end its individual's own perception to regard a space as place or non-place. Actually, the personality of the user, the aim and frequency of using the space mentioned are the factors determining the place attachment which is the main criteria of space quality; whether place or non-place. As long as the system tries to form non-places, the individual's effort to liberate himself out of control will find a way to constitute places. In other words it might be claimed that the effort of keeping "non-place" under control might be paradoxically turn it into a "place". The people who are in charge of the non-place, the people who are using and experiencing these spaces in dif-



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ferent ways start to constitute attachment to them. In this paper it is argued that even though they are generally temporary spaces and depend on several regulations, “non-place”s also have place identity. This identity is relativistic and unpredictable as it is established according to the person who experiences the relevant non-place. The so called “non-place”s are generally under control for several reasons explained in previous chapters. The way of behaving, using, passing-by are all pre-determined in these spaces. But the unpredicted usages and perceptions add place-value to them. Also, in the case of over-control reactional processes might take place that reveal personal attachment, which is obviously a quality of “place”. Therefore it might be claimed that control mechanisms have a critical role in the constitution of non-place and its semantic sustainability.

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