

The Loos of Time and Space: From Production to Consumption

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ABSTRACT

The concept of modernity has been changed and evolved from the industrial revolution up to present. Looking at the theory of modernity and its effects on human life, it can be said that, modernism has made fundamental changes in the perception of time and space.

These fundamental changes have been affective on urban and urban life, as well as, on all aspects of life, such as the urban space character and the usage practices. The changes in historical cities has not limited to urban character, it has become an attack to urban memory. Like many things of the past, also “the space” has been exposed to rapid consumption, in the age of consumption, that we live in.

In this context, the paper will consist of the main theme of “spatial transformation”. In this aim, the historic industrial buildings, which gain new functions as shopping centres today, will be examined. The spatial changes will be put forward in the light of “non-places” concept, which has been mentioned by Marc Augé.

KEYWORDS: Modernity, Urban Space, Historic City, Spatial Transformation, Non-place

1 AS A BEGINNING: FORM MODERNISATION TO GLOBALISATION

Having started in 17th century, modernist movement is still valid today. During this period, the movement has been recalled by different names in different eras, yet eventually it represents human needs and productivity.

Continuous productivity brought by modernism also brought along fast consumption and dynamism. Products produced through mass production processes not only reached consumers in the local market, but have addressed the global market as well. Products finding a place for themselves in the global market have not been merely “products”; they also caused local cultures to spread throughout the world in global scale.

Giddens (1996) indicates that “the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions have become networked across the earth’s surface as a whole”. He defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”.

Time and space perception has gone through radical changes as a consequence of modernism and globalism. Changes in social structure, re-definition of class discriminations, transformation from closed local economies to capitalist economy dominated by industry and trade, convenience introduced by technological developments and changes in life styles have been effective on the transformation of time and space concepts (Yirtici, 2005).

Capitalism, as a movement emerging after modernism, predicated the former time-space concept to a new and different time-space concept, disparate with deep and dark borders. Time for capitalism is linear, irreversible, always proceeding forwards and homogeneous and corresponding space is also homogeneous, continuous, emptied and a virtual one (Isik, 1994).



Figure 1: Modern space

According to Zukin and Jennifer (2004), most philosophers see the consumer society as a distinctive product of modernity. In this period, the desire to express individualism in social practices and mentality has led to a “general change”; creating spaces which guided the society to, exhibited and made consumers purchase the consumer products, and allowed society to derive pleasure from these products.

Thus, it would not be wrong to say that different space forms have followed one another in time. A sequence is observed from natural space towards absolute and virtual space. With the influence of capitalistic relations, virtual space evolves into extraordinary “created spaces” (Urry, 2002).

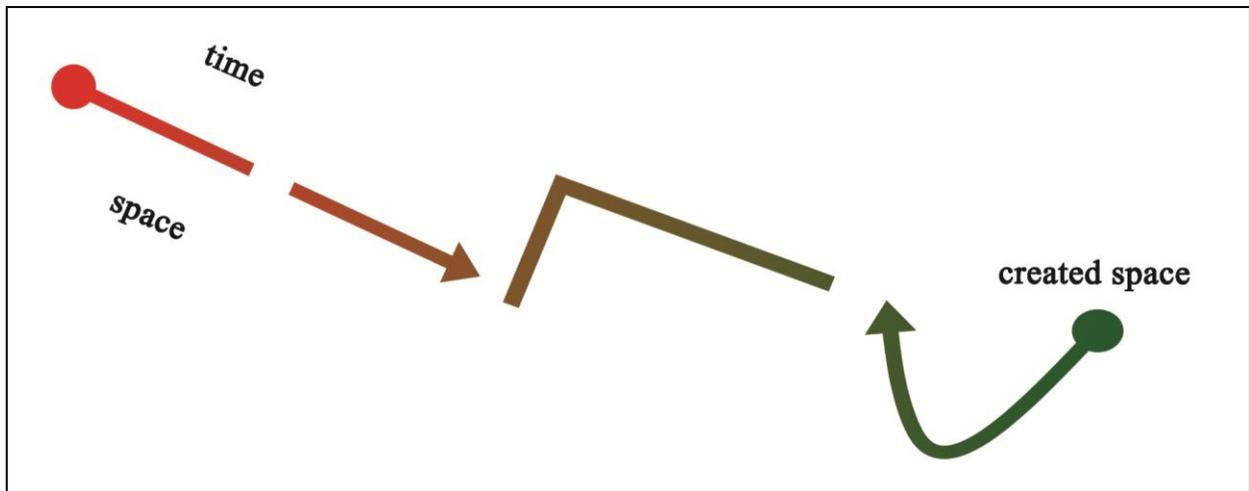


Figure 2: Supermodern space

Space-production-consumption relation is seen as the space’s inclusion of consumption in terms of consumption centres where spaces, commodities and services are compared, purchased and used; visual consumption of the space; and depletion or consumption of the space within the context of the space having qualifications literally meaningful to people in connection with that place or as being a natural environment (Urry, 2002).

Radical changes realized in time & space perception have also affected the city and the urban life. Types of non-traditional space have started to reshape the cities with the influence of the global market. Industrial structures intensely located particularly in city centres and near vicinities, which had lost their former functionality and then developed a new one; emerge as structures reshaping the city. These

buildings change the city space characteristics and practice of use with their immense mass. Renewed with a discontinuous understanding, masses existing as consumption buildings this time, cause rapid changes and transformations in urban spaces.

Space is considered as a group of unique features, usually existing in one single location. This phenomenon is as such, particularly before the space is “commercialized”. Therefore, a space should advertise for itself after being introduced to the market, as an accessible place providing whatever type(s) of service(s), possessing eye catching properties in terms of its own style. As spaces are “consumed”, they lose their initial uniqueness; commercialization makes them look identical to other places. At this point, they have to distinguish themselves from other spaces and become distinctive, just like other types of mass production products (Robins, 1996).

Current production analyses show that production of things (commodities) within the space has switched to production of the space itself (as a commodity) (Lefebvre, 2007). Thus, it can be seen that modernism has proceeded even further within time. So it has gone through a change in itself and is now evolved into a higher level concept named as “supermodernism”. This evolution and the concept of “supermodernism” is first examined by Augé and named as “If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be define as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place” (Agué, 1995).

This study intends to clarify the modernization experienced in historical cities, globalization and the concept of spatial transformation as an output under the title of “discussion on time & space”. The concept of “non-place” emerging as a result of spatial transformation takes a place “without any identity, relation and history” as the subject, as suggested by Augé. Within this context, this article examines the story of the transformation of Trabzon Tekel Building into a shopping mall.

Trabzon Tekel Building’s and Varlıbas Shopping Mall’s (SC) identity and being concerned with identity; Trabzon Tekel Building and Varlıbas SC being as relational; Trabzon Tekel Building and Varlıbas SC being as historical are determined through oral history method, with the participation of employees and users of Trabzon Tekel Building and Varlıbas SC, and the entire urban actors.

2 AS A PROBLEM: FROM SPACE TO NON-PLACE

Tekel (“monopoly” in Turkish), was a public entity with its roots reaching back to Ottoman era, which used to purchase tobacco from the producers, processed and put it into the market as tobacco products. Tekel used to operate in many regions of Turkey where tobacco was produced.

Factories, with different names, for tobacco procurement, processing and storage were built in central cities of the country since 1870’s to 2000s (Digirolu, 2007). Trabzon Tekel Building is among these factories, providing services to the tobacco producers in the region, in 1951-2002, with its 1360 employees. Trabzon Tekel Building is built next to the historical city walls. In terms of location, it is neighbouring to the historical city centre of Trabzon.

The building was constructed in two phases during 1951-1965. The entrance body located at the north side features the 2nd National Architecture Movement (Sert, 2004).

The building lost its functionality due to the reduction in tobacco plantation within the region pursuant to the governmental policies during 2000’s. Trabzon Municipality arranged a national architectural competition to revitalize the Tekel Building and its vicinity. Within the scope of this winner project, a city hall was constructed on the southern portion of Trabzon Tekel Building’s land and a new centre called Varlıbas SC on the northern part in October 2010.



Figure 3: Trabzon Tekel Building and its near surrounding (Web-1)



Figure 4: Varlıbas Shopping Centre and its near surrounding (Web-2)

2.1 About Identity, Concerning With Identity and Being without Identity

Tekel Building is considered as the most important building in Trabzon built during the 2nd National Architectural Period. The building has influenced the identity perception through creating a social and individual memory and its economic contributions to the city. It was seen as an “asset”, an “assuring” structure during the years it protected its identity.



Figure 5: Trabzon Tekel Building and its near surrounding, 1974 (Sumerkan, 1974).

It can be talked about the individual identity where individuals can demonstrate their distinctions and personal characteristics. In such spaces, individuals can build a connection with the space based on their own identities and develop this connection. Producing a product and generating income out of that product was a thing to be proud of for the former employees. In this sense, Trabzon Tekel Building gave its employees the opportunity to develop an identity.

Augé (1995) defines the concept of identity as follows: “... Through our religious accumulation of personal accounts, documents, images and all the “visible signs of what used to be”, is what is different about us now; and “within the spectacle of this difference the sudden flash of an unfindable identity”.

Within this scope, Trabzon Tekel Building was perceived, both in terms of the collective perception formed within the city and for employees of the Building, as a place where people could demonstrate their own identities. The Building ensured interactions between individuals and the space by means of the economic contributions it provided through the valuation of the product produced by the producers and the remuneration provided in return for these efforts.

Employees, as the primary users of Trabzon Tekel Building, developed an identity by being members of a collective group as well. They mentioned that working in this Building was a privilege. For the employees, the Building was considered as equal to their “homes”, where they can best express their own identities.



Figure 6: Tekel Buildings’ interiors and their workers (Dogruel, 2000).

Definition of identity about Varlıbas SC is made through Tekel Building and not through the SC building itself. This is probably because the SC was built by protecting the outer structure of Tekel Building, which leads to continuation of a Tekel Building perception in people’s minds.

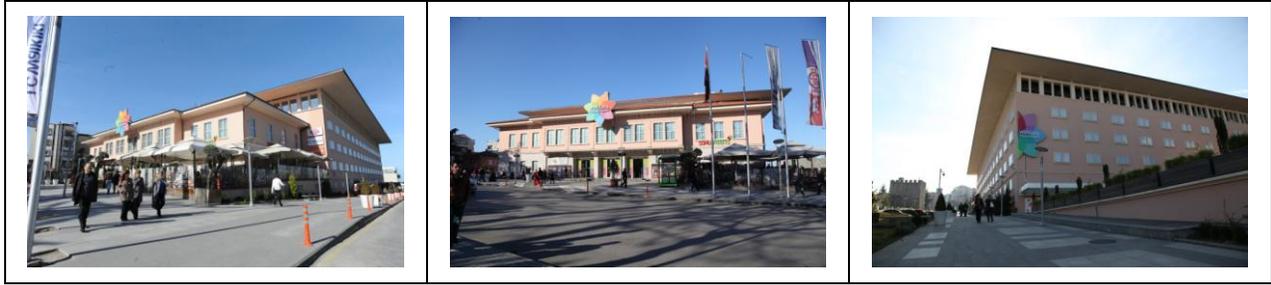


Figure 7: Varlıbas Shopping Centre and its near surrounding, 2013 (Topaloglu, 2013).

Varlıbas SC is perceived as a building where people have no difference from others and with which they cannot build any connections to make them feel special, as is the case with other shopping centres in terms of developing identity by their users.



Figure 8: Varlıbas Shopping Centre interiors and its users, 2013 (Topaloglu, 2013).

2.2 About Relation, Being Relational and Being Without Relation

The destructive effect of capitalist economy on the space and the state of being temporary in connection with the foregoing is directly related with the quantification of spatial values within the modern world, just as everything else. The phenomenon of quantification breaks its ties with the “place”, the most fundamental convention of space (Yirtici, 2005).

“Non places play no part in any synthesis, they are not integrated with anything; they simply bear witness, during a journey, to the coexistence of distinct individualities, perceived as equivalent and unconnected” (Augé, 1995).

At this point, Tekel Building had demonstrated its interaction with the environment as a place where remuneration of tobacco being produced within the vicinity is directly received. Tekel Building is described as no stranger to its surrounding; on the contrary it was a native, with regard to its location neighbouring with historical Trabzon city, as well as the Building’s architectural characteristics.

According to the interviewees, Tekel Building was a place having relations with Trabzon city and its near vicinity in terms of functionality, where the tobacco produced within neighbour cities and even within districts gained value. It is indicated that the Building had contributed economically to the development and formation of its near vicinity due to the number of employees it had. Such as that, the Building was recognized as a structure vitalizing Atapark (name of the district) and its vicinity.

Tekel Building also had physical relations with urban images located around, which have a significant place in Trabzon’s history. It is also found as having a semantic relation since it possesses the characteristics of the 2nd National Architecture Movement.

Varlıbas SC is located at the geometrical centre of the city. This location is considered as an alternative city centre with the administrative centre located nearby. Varlıbas SC shapes its surrounding with the presence of the neighbouring City Hall as a positive value and contributes to its environment

through opening of new workplaces. From a social perspective, it is understood that the SC has the quality of being a meeting point for Trabzon's residents at city scale. People consider it significant that the SC makes it easier to participate in social activities for the residents around.

2.3 About History, Being Historical and Being Without History

“Place becomes necessarily historical from the moment when – combining identity with relations- it is defined by a minimal stability. This is the case even though those who live in it may recognize landmarks there which do not have to be objects of knowledge” (Augé, 1995).

Tekel Building is located next to the historical city walls of Trabzon. Being located in a special area and the northern entrance's being constructed with the style of the 2nd National Architecture Movement, ensured the building to have its place within individual and collective history. Although most interviewees do not have direct personal memories with Tekel Building, indirect memories have been accumulated through frequently passing in front of the building, tobacco odours diffusing into the air and the crowd it created during quit hours. In addition, production of many images is ensured with the close relation built between the employees and the building and the memories they experienced there. Friendships and close relations built within Tekel Building still preserve their place in memories.

Present SC does not trigger any historical feelings for any users. Interviewees build the entire historical connections only through Tekel Building. They mention that they remember Tekel Building in all relations they had built, let it be visual or physical. Its large size, the tobacco odour and the national songs heard while passing by it are indicated as the factors effective in triggering historical feelings. Interviewees say that the newly built can never be the same as the old one and there is nothing left reflecting the history anymore. Furthermore, it is also indicated that not enough time has elapsed since its transformation to allow for developing a historical feeling.

3 AS A RESULT: FROM MEMORY TO PARTICIPATION

We live within the non-places; however, in fact, perceptually non-places are places or parts of places in which we “cannot live”. These places convey the things completely related with the function of the place and only attributed to the place. These places can sometimes be a station building, and at other times shopping centres serving as a consumption area. These places are inevitable places of today, offered to the use of urban population, through which we pass without even perceiving them within the pace of urban life, contextually isolated from their environment and have built their own world, transformed into an ordinary place through making their users lose their identities without any distinction and where no one accumulates any memories.

Spaces or architectural structures within historical cities are the most important factors to form a collective memory for the city residents. These places constituting the collective space are almost like points for holding onto the city for them. City dwellers keep their memories alive with the help of these places and develop a feeling of belonging towards the city. In this way, they develop their own identities and identify themselves with the city.

The relations historical city spaces build with their surrounding is so strong that there definitely exists a reason for that place to be located there. Belongingness of city dwellers and their memories related with the space would explain the relation that space builds with its environment. However, places introduced in our lives with the concept of “supermodernism” and which cannot be identifying, relational and historical, attack the historical urban memory. The structure of capitalism, non-continuous and tailored to destroy and build new ones instead, unmercifully forces historical urban spaces to transform.

The wind of “consuming without producing”, which has arrived a point that can be described as dangerous, poses a risk to create consequences which can never be recovered if no measures are taken. And spaces today are also at a point to have their share from such consequences. In overall society, spaces have ceased to be the base of production and become the base of consumption. Spaces have been

consumed and hollowed. The identity and identifying quality of spaces have been destroyed. The relations spaces build with their environment are weakened. The space has been subject to transformations detached from its own history. Global policies have been effective during all this extinction process and urban actors were completely neglected.

As a response to this situation, care should be taken with the steps to be taken, existing spaces should be preserved with continuous policies and the lost ones should be recovered. Transformation should not be realized as complete destruction of the available, but through protecting the existing values.

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