THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITALIST CITY, AVANT-GARDISM AND SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL AS AN ALTERNATIVE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

ÖMER BURAK POLAT

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE
IN
ARCHITECTURE

FEBRUARY 2014

Approval of the thesis:

THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITALIST CITY, AVANT-GARDISM AND SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL AS AN ALTERNATIVE

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ABSTRACT

THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITALIST CITY, AVANT-GARDISM AND SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL AS AN ALTERNATIVE

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February 2013, 88 pages

This progressive writing begins with the fundamental reasons why capitalist city fails, its ideological attributions and effects on the urban space. It is based itself on the concept of utopia as the horizon line that forces cities to progress. It goes on with relatively more recent examples, avant-garde art and its internal contradictions stated by Manfredo Tafuri, considering avant-garde art destined to recreate a more advanced ruling class. Then, a different type of avant-garde led by French revolutionist Guy Debord: The Situationist International is picked out to revisit their radical theories and practices. In its progress, this thesis claims that the Situationist International would transcend Tafuri's critique and their concepts can still construct a solid alternative to current way of living in city. It is concluded by New Babylon which is developed and based on the SI's critical tools by Dutch painter Constant Nieuwenhuys. New Babylon's position is argued in comparison with the other faction of the SI that supported more abstract methods for revolutionary urban movements.

Keywords: City, Utopia, Ideology, Situationist International, Avant-garde

ÖZ

KAPITALIST KENTİN ELEŞTİRİSİ, AVANT-GARDİSM VE ALTERNATİF OLARAK DURUMCU ENTERNASYONEL

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Şubat 2013, 88 sayfa

Bu kademeli yazı, kapitalist kentin neden başarısız olduğunun temel nedenleri, ideolojik açılımları ve kentsel mekana etkilerini açarak başlar. Yazı, kentleri ilerlemeye zorlayan ütopya kavramını ufuk çizgisi olarak ele alır. Günümüze görece daha yakın avangart sanat, içsel çelişkileri ve Manfredo Tafuri'nin, avangart sanatın ancak daha iyi gelişmiş bir muktedir sınıfı yaratmaya yazgılı olduğu eleştirisiyle devam eder. Daha sonra, Fransız devrimci Guy Debord'un öncülük ettiği farklı bir avangart, Durumcu Enternasyonel, radikal teorilerini ve pratiklerini yeniden gözden geçirmek üzere ayırt edilmiştir. Kendi süreci içerisinde bu tez, Durumcu Enternasyonel'in geliştirdiği kavramsal araçların, Tafuri'nin eleştirisini aştığını ve hali hazırdaki kent yaşamına hala sağlam bir eleştiri getirebileceğini iddia eder. Tez, Durumcuların eleştirel araçlarını baz alarak, Hollandalı ressam Constant Nieuwenhuys'un tasarladığı Yeni Babil'in pozisyonunu, durumcular içerisindeki diğer kanadın, devrimci kentsel hareketler için savunduğu daha soyut düşünce içerisinde eleştirir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kent, Ütopya, İdeoloji, Durumcu Enternasyonel, Avangart

To My Grandmother, Cavidan
To My Grandfathers, Hakkı and Selami
To June 2013

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitudes to my thesis supervisor Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargın who never refused to spend his time to his students despite his extremely busy schedule. His encouragement and patience is remarkable and priceless. Without precious discussions we have had in and out of his office hours, this thesis would have not be realized. The lectures he delivered are through and they open the minds of his students.

I owe special thanks to Prof. Dr. Ayşen Savaş who taught me the fundamental research methods with great determinism and patience.

I should mention student initiative Collective Architecture and its members for theoretical debates they had created which played important part to develop thesis' framework.

I would like to thank my parents who never gave up believing in me and constantly supported. In addition, I have to state my friend's Damla Özer's exceptional help throughout the progress and our intellectual discussions that pushed me further. I would like to express my respect to the two important intellectual figures of my life, my grandfathers. Their memories are extraordinary.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT v

ÖZ vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS viii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ix

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xi

LIST OF FIGURES..... xii

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Persisting Problematics of Architecture: Utopia and Avant-garde Art 1

1.2 Situationist International and New Babylon 5

1.3 Methodology of the Thesis 8

1.4 The Assumptions of the Thesis 10

2. HISTORY OF URBAN STRUGGLE AND ITS THEORETICAL BACKGROUND..... 11

2.1 The Dominant Ideology 11

2.2 Ideology, Language and Space 12

2.3 Urban Conditions 14

2.4 Space and Idealism 16

2.5 From Ideal Space to Ideal Politics 19

2.6 Avant-garde, Utopia and its Critique 21

2.7 Paris Commune to New Babylon 24

3. AN EXTRAORDINARY AVANT GARDE: SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL 29

3.1 Beginnings 29

3.2 Foundation of the SI 31

3.3 Negativity of dada, Surrealism and Negativity of the SI 34

3.4 The Spectacle and the Everyday Life 36

3.5 Romantic City Versus Modern City 42

3.6 Commune and the SI, the Festival 43

4. THE INVENTION OF THE TOOLS TO EXAMINE THE CAPITALIST CITY 47

4.1 Notes on "Formulary For a New Urbanism" Introduction to a Critical Urbanism 47

4.2 Psychogeography and Dèrive 49

4.3 Unitary Urbanism, A Tool to Destruct and Reshape 55

5. SITUATIONIST SPATIAL EXPERIMENTS 61

5.1 Utopia, Heterotopia and The Locus of the SI 61

5.2 Urban Planning, Pragmatism and Its Critique 63

5.3 Babylon, The Origins 67

5.4 A City of Nomads 68

5.5 The Essence of New Babylon 69

5.6 The 'Sector' 72

5.7 City of Homo Ludens, The New Babylonians 73

6. CONCLUSION: HOW SITUATIONIST CRITIQUE IS STILL RELEVANT 77

REFERENCES 82

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SI : Situationist International

LI : Lettrist International

IS : Internationale Situationniste (journal)

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

Figure 1: Merged groups to constitute the SI..... 32
(Source: Sadler, S. *The Situationist City*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1998, 2.)

Figure 2: The Photograph taken during Watts Riots, re-captioned by the SI..... 44
(Source: http://www.eastofborneo.org/archives/the-decline-and-fall-of-the-spectacle-commodity-economy)

Figure 3: "Naked City," by Guy Debord, 1957..... 52
(Source: McDonough, Tom. The Situationists and the City [in Translated from the French.]. London ; New York: Verso, 2009. 89.)

Figure 4: Project for a gypsy camp, by Constant Debord..... 66
(Source: McDonough, Tom. The Situationists and the City [in Translated from the French.]. London ; New York: Verso, 2009. 21.)

Figure 5: Model of Yellow Sector, by Constant..... 70
(Source: McDonough, Tom. The Situationists and the City [in Translated from the French.]. London ; New York: Verso, 2009. 123.)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Persisting Problematics of Architecture: Utopia and Avant-garde Art

The objective of this thesis is to reevaluate the radical urban theories of the Situationist International, an avant-garde movement led by Guy Debord. It had been contributed by many artists around the world. The groups' position was unique by its anarchist, revolutionary, libertarian thoughts on metropolis and their sway between utopia and heterotopia.

Utopia is a chronic problem area for the discipline of architecture. It is the representation of the old and odd relationship between architect's autonomy and hegemonic ideological configuration; "Utopia is a spatial term."[1] It is precisely about space. It refers to a no space condition, but concurrently it has to be built on spatial qualities. Utopia cannot exist. It is too 'good' to be true. It is a spatial fantasy immune to the reality as opposed to a feasible "future vision." It challenges the current ideology accompanied by the very possibility of reproducing it and diminishing the potential existence of a real challenge inside the domain of that ideology. The inexorable question is "Can utopia become a tool for resistance, can it generate a sharp opposition against the dominant ideology, can it genuinely interrupt ideological tautology as a 'tool' of architecture?"

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1 Sargın, Güven Arif. "Marginal Spaces." *Annex*, no. 2 (2003).

The original meaning of utopia derives from the consolidation of two combinations in Greek, eu+topos (good place) and ou+topos (no place).[2] Therefore it is expected to perceive those two meanings simultaneously. The ideal, the ultimate good place as well as the affirmation of its unrealistic position that stems from the former due to re-assignability of the ultimate good. Advanced capitalism exploited utopia into an executable future project and prevented utopia to play its critical role by extreme commodification of architecture.[3]

Avant-garde movements that deal with urban space have strong connections with utopias. It is impossible to study utopias without researching those avant-garde movements and their fundamental concepts that constitutes the elements of those utopias. So, it is vital to grasp the condition of modern avant-garde culture.

Art critic Clemens Greenberg's essay 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' written in 1939 is one of the pivotal sources on avant-garde culture. Despite his similar Marxist attitude shared with Tafuri, Greenberg is more interested in the cultural characteristics, grounds and beginnings of the avant-gardism. Greenberg indicates how Enlightenment project started to question the values of the society, then "go beyond Alexandrianism"[4] through a "historical criticism." His first definition for avant-garde is being an apparatus to achieve that transcendence. For him, that is the

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2 Utopia as a concept was invented by Thomas More and first used in his book with the exact same title. More, T. Utopia. (New York, Barnes & Noble Classics), 2005.

3 Michael Hays states that: "When architecture resists, capitalism withdraws it from service -takes it off line- so that demonstrations by architects of their critical distance of their practice from degraded life become redundant and trivialized in advance." This implicitly indicates the inevitable current of architecture to be considered as 'simply a commodity'. Then he brings Denise Scott Brown as an example to indicate the close relationship (or "source" for) between post-modern mass media, consumerism and architectural product as quoted from Brown: "Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Levittown, the swinging singles on the Westheimer Strip, golf resorts, boating communities, Co-op City, the residential backgrounds to soap operas, TV commercials and mass mag ads, billboards, and Route 66 are sources for a changing architectural sensibility." Hays, K. Michael. *Architecture's Desire : Reading the Late Avant-Garde*. Writing Architecture Series. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010, 3-4, 8.

4 Alexandrianism refers to ancestral, old fashioned way of thinking before the Enlightenment.

main reason that avant-garde is strongly associated with the abstract art and desire to eschew any meaning. Avant-garde art had unleashed itself from the previous "Alexandrian" values simply by omitting them. These movements are formed and discussed purely by the "elite" strata of Western bourgeois sharing a high taste for art. That, perforce, generated a second but an inferior culture which is dispersed among the mainstream media and this profit-oriented "kitsch" culture is served to lower classes.[5] By this way, avant-garde is absorbed by consumerism and its critical potentiality is restrained.

After Greenberg, art historian Manfredo Tafuri's critique of avant-garde is a significant one. "[I]n order to survive, ideology had to negate itself as such, break its own crystallized forms, and throw itself entirely into the construction of the future."[6] states Tafuri. He further analyzes this totality of the bourgeois/capitalist ideology perpetuated with the help of the avant-garde culture and their spatial hypothesis of future: Utopia. Tafuri attacks this specific character of avant-gardism beginning from the Age of Enlightenment. Perpetuation of the ideology through utopias is based on the "dynamic development" that intended to clear impediments for "liberating the dynamic functioning of the system."[7] The fundamental argument Tafuri presents is the urge of bourgeois intelligentsia to resolve "anguish" and "shock" originated from the intense contradiction between individuals and the

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5 Greenberg, Clement. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." *Partisan Review*. 6:5 (1939): 34-49.

6 Tafuri, Manfredo. *Architecture and Utopia : Design and Capitalist Development*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press), 1976, 50.

7 Ibid, 53.

socio-economic system that is thoroughly discussed by Simmel.[8] The "catharsis" of this contradictory situation is achieved via fabricating disapproval against the very own forms of bourgeois culture by itself.

For instance, according to Tafuri, Dadaism was nothing but "the release valve of an unlimited potential for development."[9] Therefore, Dadaists ridiculed present bourgeoisie of the era by rendering the current reality idiotic and irrational that unleashed a better bourgeoisie emancipated from the earlier values, open to never-ending alteration.[10] Tafuri then, draws quite a pessimistic, almost impossible to break totality about the revolutionary process derived from the avant-garde culture.

Academic Raymond Williams' discussion on avant-garde reinforces Tafuri's thesis. He points out that destroying current values became a violent process eventually. Such as another avant-garde body, Futurists were demonstrating gruesome antagonism towards existing values.[11] Williams,- through Strindberg and Nietzsche- opens up 'cultural Darwinism' argument which targets the whole codes of the society, not only the weak groups. As Strindberg considers 'evolution' can only proceed if society has to free itself from the European legacy and get prepared

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8 Georg Simmel states: "The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life." According to Simmel, man of the metropolis is stuck between being an emancipated, free individual and the currents of society. 19th century encourages man to set himself free from old orders then he re-realizes himself on a unique individual character. Paradoxically, at the same time he has to be the part of the modern processes of production like a cog in a machine due to the division of labour. Therefore the modern man is treated as both individual and a simple element of a system. Simmel, Georg. "Die Grosstadte und das Geistesleben" (1903); translated as "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York.: Free Press), 1950, 409.

9 Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia,* 56.

10 Ibid.

11 "[c]ome on, set fire to the library shelves. Turn aside the canals to flood the museums..." Williams, Raymond. 'The Politics of Avant-Garde.' *Politics of Modernism : [against the New Conformists]*. Radical Thinkers 23. (London ; New York: Verso, 2007), 49-63.

to receive new values. Williams also indicates the intense association between Modernism and 'vanguard,' art. The latter was the ultimate tool to claim complete rupture with the past.[12] As an inexorable result of that, it would leave the current bourgeoisie and create a more advanced class from the scratch, in spite of fact that majority of those movements declared themselves anti-bourgeoisie.[13]

1.2 Situationist International and Avant-Gardism

Nevertheless, Dadaism and Futurism which are being condemned frequently by the art critics, were not the only avant-garde movements in history. Thereby, Guy Debord as the protagonist, Situationist International was found in 1957. The mistakes made by the earlier avant-gardes recognized. They made efforts to create "situations"[14] in order to address everyday absurdity of modern life. Instead of negating within the natural forces of capitalism, Debord has based his attitude on not affirming the values of bourgeois society. He built his theories on two dichotomies: bourgeoisie/revolutionary avant-garde, affirmation/negation.[15] Despite, throughout its history, the SI struggles to get the accurate position against bourgeoise ideology and the latter's revolutionary character. Though, this is exactly because they were aware of the pivotal problem of avant-gardism,[16] the backbone of the Tafurian critique.

Guy Debord and the SI always have something to say about urban space. Before the SI had been founded, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus

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12 Ibid, 52.

13 Ibid, 53.

14 Heynen, Hilde. "New Babylon: The Antinomies of Utopia." [In English]. *Assemblage*, no. 29 (April 1996): 25.

15 McDonough, Tom. *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), x.

16 Debord, Guy. "The Great Sleep and Its Clients." *Guy Debord and the Situationist International : Texts and Documents*, edited by Tom McDonough. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1955), 21-23.

published a map titled ‘Naked City’ credited to Debord[17] which can be considered as a solid proof of the vast interest of Debord in urban conditions. The map Debord made, introduced an alternative urban reading, consisted of cut-out sections of Paris connected with others by arrow signs. Debord’s sections are delineated on psychological approach. Each section of Paris represents a distinct mood, a specific sort of ambience. The arrows between sectors derived from randomness, they signify potential wandering routes of Paris. What Debord tried to derive was a “psychogeographical” analysis of the city which portrays psychological states of inhabitants depending on place.[18] Unlike the usual functional reading and zoning, Debord focused on individual behaviour and its associations with urban space, which means the genius of the SI had been already opposing functionalist-efficient space, that the dominant ideology produced.

Capitalist urbanism is attacked rigorously by the SI. For them, “architecture functioned as guarantor of social order.” That is why the SI favoured anti-architectural attitude which supports unconditional freedom and temporality. That is why situationist artists Constant’s New Babylon consists of “extended horizontal planes” [19]instead of volumes. Constant in his article published in 1959 stated that for modern architecture: “cemeteries in reinforced concrete are being built where great masses of the population are condemned to die of boredom.”[20] The SI denoted functionalism and the dullness modern architecture engendered. Instead, urban space ought to be re-adjustable by its inhabitants to trigger imaginative

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17 McDonough. *Guy Debord and the Situationist International : Texts and Documents*, 241.

18 Heynen, "New Babylon: The Antinomies of Utopia," 26.

19 McDonough, Tom. "Fluid Spaces: Constant and the Situationist Critique of Architecture." In *The Activist Drawing : Retracing Situationist Architectures from Constant's New Babylon to Beyond*, edited by M. Catherine de Zegher and Mark Wigley. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 93-103.

20 The urbanism the SI proposed with New Babylon cannot be come true for capitalist kind of life, it requires a different life and vice versa. Constant. "A Different City for a Different Life." In *Guy Debord and the Situationist International : Texts and Documents*, edited by Tom McDonough. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1959, 95-101.

thought.[21] Constant considered the “functional city” as a place to settle, hence the antithesis of it has to promote “nomadic” lifestyle similar to the passengers in an airport. Because they never felt they are “at home” but they are emancipated from the functional liabilities of the conventional city.[22]

Constant conceptualize a city as one mega-machine consists of unitary spatial configurations that allow to change anything, anytime, anywhere. City is dedicated to play, not to work. The city for him, is a colossal playground. It is the exact opposite of logical city designed by the means of efficiency. In New Babylon, everything is accomplished by machines. Inhabitants do not have to work at all. They wander freely on massive sectors, on the labyrinthine components of the city that are all uniquely configured to inspire various ambiances. The sectors are connected with each other to become one, integrated urban form going on all over the earth. It is a utopia that consists of “uncontrolled” spaces. It is uncanny, anti-functionalist, it proposes a completely different understanding of urbanism, which makes New Babylon significant.[23]

The overall conceptual apprehension of Situationist ideal urban space, ‘Unitary Urbanism’ was was first theorised by prior avant-garde group Lettrist International. Its beginning lies in an article written in 1953 by Gilles Ivain.[24] In the same year, Constant published an article encouraging “transformation of daily reality.”[25] Before the SI had been formed, there was an accumulation of knowledge that

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21 Heynen, "New Babylon: The Antinomies of Utopia," 26.

22 McDonough, "Fluid Spaces: Constant and the Situationist Critique of Architecture," 97.

23 Constant, M. Catherine de Zegher, Mark Wigley, and Drawing Center (New York N.Y.), *The Activist Drawing : Retracing Situationist Architectures from Constant's New Babylon to Beyond*, 27-8.

24 Ibid, 24-39.

25 Ross, Kristin. "Lefebvre on the Situationist: An Interview." In *Guy Debord and the Situationist International* : Texts and Documents, edited by Tom McDonough. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press), 2002, 267-83.

would be used by the SI later on. In spite of the theoretical consensus between the SI and Constant for a moment, in practice they had some disagreements that consequently led to resignation of Constant from the SI in 1960.[26]

This disagreement between Debord and Constant is important for the course of this thesis. Debord was against any kind of prescription. Instead he wished to provoke peculiar conditions to give rise "situations." For him their role should have not be describing a new kind of architecture and its theoretical formula. This is the reason why the parts about New Babylon is not going to be focused on the models, drawings or concrete definitions in this thesis. Rather, New Babylon's theoretical accumulation is opted. With this choice, this thesis assumes a continuity from the LI to Constant's solo works in terms of theoretical body they seem to share. And it is exclusively the critique of capitalist city and its apparatuses. However, after stating that, there is also an intrinsic opposition between Debord's and Constant's attitude, especially in the level of end product derived from the same critical viewpoint. This will be discussed in the conclusion chapter.

1.3 Methodology of the Thesis

This thesis is an attempt to seek for an exception, for another type of avant-garde and its spatial connotations which does not contemplate the perpetuation of the bourgeois dominion as Tafuri argued.[27] In this sense, the case is the Situationist International and their eventual utopia 'New Babylon' and their more theoretical body 'Unitary Urbanism.'

This open-ended research suggests to follow a qualitative method and since the primary object of the study requires social and political analysis. Keeping an

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26 Wigley, 27.

27 Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*.

attitude based on an advocacy/participatory (or emancipatory) worldview[28] is an obvious preference here. Using a broad philosophical/sociological bibliography is necessary to frame the discussion accurately.

The overall structure of the thesis is going to be resolved in six major chapters;

1. **Introduction**

2. **Beginnings Of The Critique Of Capitalist City And Theoretical Background:** The second chapter is on both the ideological background and the emergence of metropolis. This chapter aims to introduce the ideological context and the circumstances that caused urban struggles besides the initial utopias which have gradually become political instruments with critiques based on urban space.

3. **An Extraordinary Avant Garde: Situationist International:** The above chapters are going to define the overall philosophical framework to argue following chapters. The third chapter will be based on Situationist International, Guy Debord and the group's historical process from its birth. It is the anatomy of the SI in general, an inquiry without avant-garde movement produced its spatial future vision, utopia, 'New Babylon.'

4. **The Invention Of The Tools To Examine The Capitalist City:** This chapter will be based on alternative urban reading techniques they had used. Those methods the SI created became the theoretical/practical foundation of New Babylon when they come together with Constant's own ideas. It is crucial to understand how the SI reads the urban space and how they form their resistance against the former.

5. **Situationist Spatial Experiments:** Here, New Babylon and Unitary Urbanism will be thoroughly discussed in terms of the theoretical framework which previous chapters provide.

6. **Conclusion:** Unitary Urbanism and New Babylon are contrasted in terms of utopia as a future provision or an open-ended experiment.

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28 See for 'Marxist' point of view in humanities research, Creswell, John W. *Research Design : Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2009).

1.4 The Assumptions of the Thesis

To re-emphasize, this thesis intend to research the SI's urban concepts with a critical distance, the early 20th century urban proposals are designed with social concerns. They may be succeeded or not, they intended to answer people needs without neglecting the dreadful consequences the World wars.

Despite their contradictory stance against current social situation, they

- Early avant-gardes seemed to challenge hegemonic social conditions.
- Those avant-garde movements and their spatial concepts, inevitably perpetuated capitalist-bourgeois exploitation relations.
- Situationist International is worth meticulous attention because it was founded on the awareness of the problems of the early 20th century avant-gardism that Tafuri deliberately indicated.
- Therefore, the SI represents a different kind of avant-gardism
- Unitary Urbanism is still relative to today's conditions

Where does the SI stand in those peculiar speculations? According to Manfredo Tafuri, the utopias of the early 20th century are vital tools to recreate bourgeois ideology. Intriguingly, The urban concepts of the SI are generated to be antithesis of capitalist urbanism, explicitly concerned not to reproduce and develop the existing exploitation relations.

Thus, this thesis will be mainly revisiting of the urban concepts of the SI including New Babylon and Unitary Urbanism. The strategy to execute this task is built on the Tafuri's critical position on the modern avant-garde and their utopias. The thesis presumes that fresh deductions can be still derived from the SI's urban concepts to set an alternative reference point for today's urban situation.

CHAPTER 2

BEGINNINGS OF THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITALIST CITY AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Dominant Ideology

Ideology, as Terry Eagleton points out have wide variety of meanings.[29] Definition of ideology is out of the scope of this paper, however it lies in the very foundation of this thesis, it is necessary to clear which meaning(s) of ideology is going to be discussed. At the end, ideology is a starting point. Any production, including art and even avant-garde art has been occurred under the circumstances ideology supplied.

Indeed, ideology is not single block, multiple ideologies may coexist within the dominant ideology. However there is -at least in this case- a dominant ideology that sets the common or mainstream customs for the major part of the society.

The phrase 'dominant ideology' usually refers to Italian author and political activist Antonio Gramsci and his widely used term 'hegemony.'[30] As Michael Cormack summarizes, it is the supremacy of a social class over the others. Yet it is not that simple, likewise the definition of ideology, it is a complex kind of struggle which is able to contain multiple components that may contradict each other. Cormack admits that he draws an extremely broad sense of ideology, but in general sense it is

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29 Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology : An Introduction*. (London ; New York: Verso, 1991).

30 Gramsci, Antonio, and David Forgacs. *The Gramsci Reader : Selected Writings*, 1916-1935. (New York: New York University Press), 2000.

an “unconscious stabilizer and justifier of status quo” and it is an ever-going process rather than a stable situation as long as there are multiple social classes.[31]

Although the belief systems seem to be ideological, it is only true when they are related with power.[32] Ideology legitimizes itself through various strategies, or in Althusserian terms: with apparatuses.[33] According to Louis Althusser, Ideology is a superstructural force to conceal and reproduce exploitation (labour and surplus) relations on infrastructure, namely production relations. Ideology works through state apparatuses such as education, culture, religion and so forth. Indeed he mentions one kind of ideology, ideology of the dominant social class, and the ideology ensures the continuation of its dominance.

2.2 Ideology, Language and Space

There are pertinent objections made by recent authors such as Nicholas Abercrombie that ideology cannot be identified as it is the precise duplication of the domain of sovereign social class. However he argues, it is not that “well marked” [34] anymore in the late capitalism. For Eagleton, ideology does not act as a unified body. [35] It is not only a reflection, but it has some concrete bounds with the material aspects of the social life. Ideology is merely consisted of signs. Medium of both ideology and social struggle is the language. In the sphere of signs there is a relative autonomy which leads to production of “accents.” That is how ideology retains its “dynamism.” [36]

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31 Cormack, Michael J. *Ideology*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 15-17.

32 Eagleton, *Ideology*, 4.

33 Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm.

34 Abercrombie, Nicholas, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner. *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*. (London ; Boston: G. Allen & Unwin, 1980).

35 A Soviet philosopher and linguist who lived between 1895-1936.

36 Eagleton, *Ideology*, 193-96.

Space too is a sign, stems from the physical reality, that plays unique roles in society and language or to refer above; ideology. Then it would be possible to reveal ideological and political meanings of space in this way by analyzing how it is produced and it is experienced. This is the line, space had been emancipated from its cartesian bounds; natural sciences and mathematics. It is considered as a social product.[37]

Although the dominant ideology seems to tolerate some deviation, hegemony of that dominant social class prevails and seeks to maintain sovereignty via 'state.'[38] Considering space in this way, it is impossible to think space outside of the politico-social domain. Althusser regards concrete existence of ideology built upon the apparatuses of superstructure. The superstructure acts to conceal exploitation relations caused by the infrastructure and it ensures unencessity of continuos use of the repressive apparatuses.[39] Then, it is not difficult to attribute that the space production processes belong to ideological apparatuses.

Roland Barthes interprets an analogous condition on press photography. He asserts that a press photograph could be considered as a "message" that involves "source of emission, a channel of transmission, and a medium of reception."[40] That photograph becomes a message when it is placed in a certain position on a newspaper with captions, headlines and other kinds of texts decided by a group of

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37 Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 1.

38 Ibid, 10.

39 Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." (1971). http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm.

40 Barthes, *Responsibility of Forms*, 3.

people works for the newspaper proper to its political orientation.[41] Despite these organized interventions, the photographer has still some power over the message. At the end, the content of the picture frame has a dependency on the photographer himself. A press photograph claims to be the direct representation of reality. However, within the society, a second message received altered by cultural and 'ideological' circumstances. This paradox sways between the "denoted" message set by the emitter and the "connoted" message comprehended by the receiver.

The semiological argument Barthes presents seems to be applicable for the production of space and how the message is received. Architect keeps his/her autonomous position to an uncertain degree similar to the photographers stance. Barthes based his argument on "imitative arts." Prior to construction, architectural project consists of nothing but an assemblage of representational products of a future real. Those collection of images have similar claim with the photograph: the portrayal of "the literal reality." Architecture generates secondary meanings from the production processes, relationships with the dominant ideology and sociological outputs.

2.3 Urban Conditions

Karl Marx considers the city as the ultimate accumulation of both capital and culture. City is the place where crowds of workers gather together. Population becomes intensified in the city that results concentrated capital and it becomes the core of both the exploitation and class struggle. Marx was able to see the dynamism

41 Barthes states that the same photograph will have different meanings when placed in a conservative newspaper (*Aurore*) or a communist publishing (*Humanité*). Later on, the SI were going to change the caption of a photograph to transmit their own supporting message originally used by the mainstream media to demote Watts Riots of Afro-American people occurred in 1965.

of the city life as opposed to rural life which is slow-changing and stable.[42] The Metropolis is being the primary surface of class struggles.

Friedrich Engels claims that the city is the place where class consciousness would ascend gradually due to ever-growing oppositions between ruling and subordinate classes. He conducted his analysis on circumstances of worker class in Manchester, an industrially advanced city. According to him, growing industry means growing hopes for a proletariat movement. The number of workers escalated by the industrial growth. By this way they would be able to come together in large numbers and form worker's associations to increase their political strength.[43]

To claim his thesis, he begins telling the wealth of London, the centralized capital at the core of the city, concentrated human crowds, colossal docks on Thames. Then, he contrasts this scene with the slums existed next to this prosperousness. The working-class which was forced to live there as opposed to lavishing London seen at first glance. By doing that, Engels differentiates the wealthy and the poor, derived from how sectors of the urban land shared among the social classes. In 1844, Engels located social situations of a metropolis by the districts and he took attention to huge difference between those. For him, metropolis was the platform of "social warfare," the never-ending clash between the classes.

That is the reason why ideal cities, utopias are being contemplated. City is the place of unfairness but also is the place of social change. The dynamics of the city makes it a unique spatial configuration and playground for idealistic thought.

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42 Merrifield, Andy. *Metromarxism; a Marxist tale of the city*. (New York: Routledge), 10-25. From Manifesto of the Communist Party: "The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West."

43 Merrifield, "Frederick Engels Backstreet Boy in Manchester"
Metromarxism; a Marxist tale of the city, 27-47.

2.4 Space and Idealism

Notes on 'Utopia:' The Dawn of the Spatial Idealism

> "... a prince ought to take more care of his people's happiness than of his own, as a shepherd is to take more care of his flock than of himself" [44]

The word of utopia was first used by Sir Thomas More. despite of the fact that, More's Utopia is not the earliest text on an ideal administration. Prior to Utopia, there is Plato's The Republic[45] which is a philosophical approach to the idea of a state model, a conceptual critique by bringing Socrates in to the play to enable his irony; questioning justice, the reason of the existence of a state. The dialogue run by the character Socrates who was the mental image of Plato's ideal Socrates.

Compared with More's Utopia, there is an epistemological[46] difference with The Republic. Contrary to the textual-philosophical way of conveying the ideal state, More makes the reader visualize his ideal state. It is not only an abstract idea of state, but it is a country where people live in. It exists on an imaginary land. It turns into a spatial discourse. Utopia's emphasis is on space, unlike in the Republic it is an auxiliary element of the ideal state, a background aspect of Socrates' story.

Italian bureaucrat Niccolo Machiavelli's oeuvre, the Prince[47] was written in Italy in the same era with Utopia. In The Prince, the ideal state is achieved by the nobleman who acts according to Machiavelli's advices. The idealist focus is on the politics. The perfect state is based on a perfect ruler who knows every detail of administering Italy.

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44 More, *Utopia*, 35.

45 Sir Thomas More had learnt Greek in Canterbury Collage, Oxford. Indeed, he studied the works of ancient philosopher, he refers Plato's The Republic in Utopia.

46 Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. World of Man. [1st American ed. (New York,: Pantheon Books, 1971).

47 Machiavelli, Niccolò. The Prince. (USA: Project Gutenberg, 2006). http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1232.

Utopia's[48] importance lies in its focus on space. By this way *topos* enters the realm of idealism with Utopia. Whence, Utopia can be considered to be the first spatial discourse on an ideal life and state in the literature. In a way 'Utopia' is a beginning. It can be useful to initiate the discussion of the problem of utopia by analyzing the original Utopia.

Utopia is written on the premise that the existing state, is corrupted and a better kind of administration is possible to be built. In this prominent book, More did not only create the philosophical aspects of that state, but also he put it in practice on an imaginary land. He compares the current state in Britain with the ideal state in Utopia and contrasts them. It is a critique based on space of that existing conditions owing to the ruling methods prevailed in Britain. He created alternative thinking for justice, working, production relations, daily life of the citizens, central administration, local and central governments, war tactics, espionage, economical system; he rethinks every component of a fair state.

The country Utopia, which is told by the protagonist Hythloday, a friend of Amerigo Vespucci, is based on a state controlled economy that provides distribution of wealth equal as to all citizens. There is no private property to prevent unjust. People of Utopia wear the same clothes, they work the same yet less hours, they eat together, they share everything produced. There is not a monetary system or speculative market available in society. Use value of commodities predominates the exchange value. Production is administered according to the needs of the society, private surplus is forbidden.

More's critique of the system in Europe includes social structure as well. He compares the "man" of the epoch "who seeks his own wealth," with the "man" of Utopia who "pursue the good of the public." Since there is no private ownership, all people of Utopia works for the good of the society. "Man" knows that he has to

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48 Referring to the introduction section, utopia is consolidation of two greek words eu+topos (meaning good place), and ou+topos (meaning no place).

take care himself and his family, otherwise they will suffer from being poor and hungry. In Utopia however, every commodity is shared within the society, they know they are taken care of by the system, they are "free from the anxieties."

More remarks the unequal labor between social classes, that the wealthy ones such as "a nobleman, a goldsmith, a banker" do not have to work or do anything for the public good. Although a manual labourer such as "a carter, a smith or a ploughman" works excessively, they live penniless throughout their whole existence. However in Utopia, all people work for the same hours. Everyone, -more or less- labour equally and since all people works, overall efficiency is raised, the work hours are incredibly lowered. There is no "idle" person such as "priests, rich men, nobleman and gentlemen" in Utopia.

More believes that somewhere on earth, this system is working (or might be working). This place is driving the perfect society. This is where More goes beyond philosophy by using space as the tool of realization. In Utopia, there are schools, agricultural lands and temples, the place they go after supper, dining halls where all people gathered around for dinner.

Sir More tells the scheme of the capital city Amaurot. It is founded near a river with "almost square" master plan. After a page long description about the river, its relationship with the city and ocean, he mentions twenty feet wide streets protected from the winds, uniform buildings "looks like one house." They are large three-story, covered with "stone, plastering, or brick" houses that have two doors: one to the street another to garden which they "cultivate with great care" and they are the most valued spaces in whole town. The roofs are flat and they use large amounts of glass for glazing accompanied by "thin linen cloth." More's conscious path is a spatial simulation. Space is an instrument of persuasion that this ideal state is able to work in an actual country.

2.5 From Ideal Space to Ideal Politics

More's Utopia is a drastic change and rule-breaker in the history of Utopia. However those platonic texts were created to address a relatively small audience.[49] After all, Machiavelli's The Prince is attributed to Lorenzo de' Medici and More was a British elite. Utopia of the Sixteenth century was more of "an instrument of education," it did not embraced forces of social transformation. It was not to mean a future-ideal, it was more into a universal-platonic ideal.[50] Nevertheless, with the Enlightenment, it became "activist" rather than "contemplative," society became its prominent object. Positivist character of the era, discussed 'man' as the "natural man." It was an endeavour to understand "human nature" by means of Newtonian prescriptions.[51]

Though, the Eighteenth century philosophers reconsidered utopia as a political stance, a rational future. A society under positivist ruling that might soothe the social problems of the industrial age.[52] What Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier sought was a general scientific rule of how society acts considering it was a single body. While Fourier was conceptualizing his *Phalanstère* which are public accommodation units for a socialist state that eliminates poverty, Saint Simon proposed a technocratic state with a scientific attitude allowing avant-garde arts to push society forward.[53]

The influence of the French Rationalism did not disappear in the realm of utopias in the twentieth century. With Hegelian historicism, spirit of the era and historical dialectic has been implemented the utopian discourses. Modern architects were

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49 Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 14.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid, 19.

53 Mallgrave, *Modern architectural theory : a historical survey, 1673-1968,* 78.

using the words “epoch,” “era” with “exact prescriptions,” “the great machine,” ... saviour now as for all civilizations” simultaneously.[54] They were integrating two different modes of thinking; positivist social science and historical consciousness. However, it would be appropriate to say that -including Modern architecture- the essence of utopian thinking consists of social concerns.

The twentieth century architects were aware of the social problems emerged from the poor social conditions appeared in the city. They were trying to grasp the sprit of the era. Not to entail short term precautions, they were into recreating the future city that is appropriate for a just society.[55] In the twentieth century, utopias became political apparatuses with future schemes rather than being mere fantasy. Therefore this might be considered to be the second break since the introduction of spatial platonism. Now space is appointed to be the tool of the social transformation, and this is of course primarily executed by the architect whose medium is space.

Urban utopias can be considered as the continuum of its predecessors. Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City distributes land as one-acre portions for each family, while Howard’s Garden City manifested a self-sustainable, socialist urban development. At the dawn of the twentieth century, there were two opposing notions on the future of the West. One was claiming the inevitable doom of Western civilization: Oswald Spengler who wrote ‘The Decline of the West’ and Frederick Winslow Taylor who initiated the concept of industrial efficiency with a more optimistic view. Spengler was heralding the collapse of Western civilization. Never-ending wars and social problems had reached an ultimate point. Taylor, contrary to pessimism of Spengler, proposed efficient labour to alleviate working class’ abysmal conditions. Therefore,

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54 Rowe, *Collage City*. 27.

55 Robert Fishman bases his views on three twentieth-century architects who are Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. He considers their urban projects as ‘utopian.’
Fishman, Robert. *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier*. 1st MIT Press pbk. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982).

there was a significant intellectual reaction and accumulation corresponding to the social problems of the 20th century.

2.6 Avant-garde, Utopia and its Critique

The Enlightenment to The Modern

The above are the circumstances gave rise to the avant-garde art and utopias. They were appeared to address the anxious metropolitan life of *Blasé*[56] type. What seems to be -until now- utopia acted as spatial vanguard, a critique of the existing urban conditions seem to form strong alternatives against it.

The primary argument Tafuri proclaims on the interrelation between utopia and ideology is mostly based on the ideological discourse of Karl Mannheim. Through Mannheim's theories, Tafuri reveals the true nature of the early twentieth century utopia. They are "liberating the dynamic development,"[57] dissolving the anguish of bourgeoisie. Utopias are exploited by the dominant ideology to break "crystallized forms" and they are converted back to ideology.

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[56] In a town where monetary economy dominates, Simmel believes that the principal contradiction a person persistently experiences is the conflict between being a free, unique individual and being one of the bits that constitutes the whole society. Urban-dweller tries to protect "his" individuality amidst rapid and everlasting stimuli created by the city life. Social relationships are built on a crudely rational ground and all values are diminished to quantitative ones. The intellectual metropolitan dweller lives at a supreme domain of senses. "He" is constantly stimulated by the urban habitat. These make urban dweller overloaded due to countless impulses. "He" becomes unable to react anymore. "He" renders every impulse the same. "He" reconstructs the environment in homogeneous way and money become the universal value maker due to its intrinsic dullness. It sets value merely by adjusting the quantification. This kind of behaviour was called "*blasé*" by Simmel.
Simmel, Georg. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." In, (1903). http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL_Images/Content_store/Sample_chapter/0631225137/Bridge.pdf.

57 Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*. 42.

Tafuri considers that the establishment of modern art began in the Enlightenment and it should be considered "as a unitary development."[58] His emphasis is mostly on Marc-Antoine Laugier, and picturesque formalism derived from obsession with nature. A focus on cultural/superstructural level of the urban planning provides concealment of the substructural level of capitalism. It is not a coincidence that there is "no social utopia," formalism prevails he insists.[59] Nature and reason was merged to fabricate an illusion that rural accumulation and urban accumulation are in the same character. Tafuri states that, this rationalist planning of the city was aimed to "break ... crystallized forms" of the former Baroque city. Étienne-Louis Boullée's monumental dreams of "geometric purification"[60] idealized in gigantic scales are not far from reality. Instead they were mere experiments. Enlightenment architecture embraced reality as the ultimate artefact. What they have created was a challenge to previous modes of architecture and they aimed to generate a new architecture responding to the new economical and social order of alleged Rationalism. Therefore, architecture restructures its tools to find its place to produce forms for the new system.

Both Le Corbusier's and the Enlightenment architects' obsession with formalism can be explained by their aspiration of a convenient future architecture. That would be an environment appropriate for a future bourgeoise city, eliminating potential and eminent contradictions of the metropolis to sustain its existence. Le Corbusier

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58 Tafuri, Manfredo. "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, ed. Hays, K. Michael, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1998), 6.

59 Op, cit, 12.

60 Ibid, 13.

thought that technology would solve all of the social problems.[61] He thought it was best to produce houses with the same concept of making a mass produced automobile.[62] Those houses he asserts provides better standards and he is simultaneously rendering the aristocrat Paris as an unlivable city. He was desacralizing the old values of Baroque Paris and proposing a technological replacement from the scratch.

Le Corbusier's statements in his 'Towards a New Architecture' have startling similarities with Quatremère de Quincy's statements Tafuri presents as examples for the theoretical structure the Enlightenment. As the Enlightenment architecture sought universality theory with connotations of Nature and theories of Newton, early twentieth century architecture also had significant attachments to that epoch's characteristics.

> Considering it only from the point of view of utility, it surpasses all the arts. It [architecture] provides for the salubrity of cities, guards the health of men, protects their property, and works only for the safety, repose, and good order of civil life.[63]
>
> A house is a machine for living in. Baths, sun, hot-water, cold-water, warmth at will, conservation of food, hygiene, beauty in the sense of good proportion. An armchair is a machine for sitting in and so on.[64]

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61 It is mesmerizing to see that Le Corbusier compares steamships with buildings and how he considers both as immerse technological achievements, see Le Corbusier. *Towards a New Architecture*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1986). 92.: "Architects live and move within the narrow limits of academic acquirements and in ignorance of new ways of building, and they are quite willing that their conceptions should remain at doves kissing one another. But our daring and masterly constructors of steamships produce palaces in comparison with which cathedrals are tiny things, and they throw them on to the sea."

62 That reveals he is inspired from Taylorism, series of effective production principles which initiated scientific approach to mass production and management of labour. Later on, his ideas were twisted by large corporations that is called Fordism See, Taylor, Frederick Winslow. "*The Principles of Scientific Management*." Gutenberg Project, http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6435/pg6435.html.

63 Quatremere de Quincy, *Architecture and Utopia*. 12.

64 Le Corbusier. *Towards A New Architecture*. 95.

It is surprising to see that there is that level of resemblance between the two thinkers regardless of two centuries between them. They both signify one of the paths utopias are brought to, development of the current conditions rather than genuinely challenging fundamentals of the system. They did not embrace a revolutionary way of thinking which explains the relative realism behind their ideas.

Tafuri remarks the two roads of modern art, one is achieved by investigating the reality, grasping its twisted nature and the other tries to transcend that reality to manufacture fresh realities. Therefore the avant-garde art movements of the early twentieth century had liberated the intrinsic dynamism of bourgeoisie and created a better ruling class. Avant-garde did nothing but set the "development" free by desacralizing values -as in the case of dadaism- so that new values can be constructed without any serious resistance. In his case, utopia constructs a possible future.[65]

2.7 Paris Commune to New Babylon

Can the Tafurian critique equally explain the way Saint-Simon and Fourier opens in the history of avant-garde? In the eighteenth century, divergent type of utopian thought had appeared. One of them belongs to Henri de Saint-Simon, who stated that the society's main objective ought to be ending the poverty of the lower classes. To achieve that he proposed a state ruled by technocrats who are obliged to apprise the best interests of the society by controlling the whole production processes.[66]

The other prominent thinker is Charles Fourier. He represents the other wing of socialist idealism. While Saint-Simon is on the side of authoritarian, powerful state,

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65 Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*. 56.

66 Kirkup, Thomas, and Edward R. Pease. *A History of Socialism*. 5th ed. (London,: A. and C. Black, 1913).

Fourier defended local communities living in harmony. In spite of his divine overtones, his ideas were completely detached from orthodox Christianity. His motivation came from the same source with others: the corruption of the current economic and social system. He thought the system was fundamentally ill and wicked, it had to be replaced with a better one.[67] His efforts were to find out a scientific formula to run such a community, which is a consistent attitude regarding the Nineteenth century. He was inspired from Newton's laws and he was trying to explore the counterpart laws for the society.[68]

In Phalanstère which is a massive building of socialist community, Fourier presents a wholly different system. It contains eighteen hundred people who elects their officials. Inhabitants have an immense level of freedom. Productivity is arranged by the likings of the population. They have right to choose how are they going to live as free individuals. The workers who are doing hardest jobs get the most reward, while the pleasant jobs' incomes are the lowest. Fourier thought that since Phalanstère is easy to practice, after some successful models it could be transformed into a world-wide community.[69]

Fourier condemns the current civilization for oppressing humanly desires and extreme poverty caused by inefficient production and distribution settings. He suggests collective work in Phalanstère ensures fulfillment of passions and happy inhabitants.[70] Despite the the promising socialist configuration of Fourier, he did not address the fundamental social problems such as private property, social inequality, egotism.[71] In the end, both thinkers' ideas are tried to be utilized as

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67 Saint-Simon considered those times as "indeed an upside-down word." See: Harvey, David. *Paris, Capital of Modernity.* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 64.

68 Ibid, 35.

69 Ibid 35-40.

70 Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 69.

71 Ibid, 39.

reformist ideas by Napoleon himself.[72] Or the fundamental ideas of French socialists are used by Le Corbusier to design Unite d'Habitation[73] for solving the workers' housing problems. In this sense, Tafuri's critique seems to be applicable here. Revolutionary ideas were transformed to reformist ones; at the end reproducing the dominant ideology.

The Paris Commune

In France, all these socialist accumulation was transformed into The Paris Commune. It was a briefly enacted utopia in 1871. It lasted only for seventy-two days and it is still a relevant resistance model for working classes.[74] After defeat of French Army under command of Napoleon III and his eventual capture, Paris had been living under the siege of German army for four months. The people of France suffered from hunger and they broke their faith with their rulers. The National Guard[75] who fought against German forces had not given up their arms. Thereafter the Paris Commune began. Working class took control of Paris with a Central Committee of the representatives of all twenty-two districts of Paris and National Guard. The Commune was the first known working-class government in history.[76] As Leon Trotsky points out, The Paris Commune was a "prologue," demonstrating a working-class ruling is possible. He continues, it might have been lasted only for two months but it did not happen even for an hour in England or in United States.[77]

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72 Harvey, *Paris, the Capital of Modernity*. 69.

73 Henket, Hubert-Jan, and Hilde Heynen. *Back from Utopia : The Challenge of the Modern Movement*. (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002), 285.

74 Jennes, D. *Leon Trotsky on the Paris Commune*. (New York,: Pathfinder Press, 1970). 3-9.

75 An armed forces consists of the civillian French people, initially formed by middle-class then expanded with all working-class during the siege of Paris.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid, 12-13.

Paris Commune was not intended to form a socialist state, in fact they were striving to save Paris from German influence. Trotsky mentioned that it was the "sequence of political events,"[78] working class had no chance but to accept the political power and decide their own fate. The actual importance of the Paris Commune was stated by Marx, it was the emancipation of labour force and refusing individual property. He was declaring that it was communism.

By this way, people for government turned into "government of the people by the people." All of the public services were not the property of the central government anymore.[79] Peter Kropotkin was supporting a similar approach. The Commune was constructed with a collective effort of Parisians. There was no philosopher or any prescription behind it.[80] The Commune was constructed by Parisians without any external influence. The Streets of Paris was safe for the first time without the police force of a central government.[81] During the Commune, Paris ceased to be aristocratic or bourgeoise city. Urban space was seized by the working class against German occupation, exploitation and central government of France.

Besides the war and its political status, Paris is a metropolis, a place of accumulation of exploited surplus, a city where the working classes are concentrated in masses. There were 'mature' political conditions. However, only Paris had this revolutionary potential only a true metropolis can belong.

Almost hundred years later than Paris Commune, another kind of urban revolution was conceptualized by an avant-garde group whose core is composed of genuinely radical thinking. A member of L'Internationale Situationniste created Unitary

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78 Ibid.13.

79 Marx, Karl. *The Civil War in France*. (Moscow,: Progress Publishers, 1972).

80 Kropotkin, Peter. "The Paris Commune." Freedom Pamphlets, no. 2 (1880).

81 Marx, *The Civil War in France*.

Urbanısm and New Babylon with traces from Commune and revolutionary premises which is able to transcend the critique of Tafuri.

CHAPTER 3

AN EXTRAORDINARY AVANT GARDE: SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL

3.1. Beginnings

1950's and Lettrist International: "Never work!"

Despite it is impossible to ignore the link between dada, Surrealism and the SI,[82] they should be separately studied regarding their distinct political stances. As Debord states, both Surrealism and dada were trapped in "the very artistic sphere" that they had already announced obsolete, which explains perfectly their eventual political failure.[83] Despite its artistic foundation, the SI's prominent sphere of action was intensely and intentionally politics.

The Situationist International was founded by consolidating three avant-garde groups: The International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, Lettrist International, London Psychogeographical Association.[84] The most prominent group was the Lettrists which Debord participated in. Debord and his comrades had been the hardcore members of the group and eventually they got split.

The original Lettrism was founded by Isadore Isou and it was taken its name for the aim to bring poetry to mere letters. Isou's movie shown in the Cannes Film Festival without any images influenced Debord to make his own peculiar movie, *Howling in*

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82 Löwy, Michael. *Morning Star : Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia*. The Surrealist Revolution Series. 1st ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press), 2009, 98.

83 Debord, G. *The Society of the Spectacle*. (New York.: Zone Books), 1994, 56.

84 Coverley, Merlin. *Psychogeography*. (Ebbw Vale: Pocket Essentials, 2006), 81.

favor of Sade, declaring the death of cinema with 24 minutes of nothing on screen with absolute silence at the end of the film.[85]

Debord and his fellows attacked the mainstream culture that caused the split in the Lettrists. That includes breaking in the Charlie Chaplin's press conference in Ritz for campaign of *Limelight*, accusing Chaplin in the leaflet they had scattered: "he-who-turns-the-other-cheek" — the other cheek of the buttock — but for us, the young and beautiful, the only answer to suffering is revolution." They were bold enough to bound a priest, wore his vestments and declare the death of God to high mass at Notre Dame. After all, this hard core camp of Lettrist founded Lettrist International (LI) in November 1952.[86]

LI consisted of "drunks" and "geniuses" and it had prepared the foundation of many radical concepts later used through the lifetime of the SI. One of them is *dèrive*, which is a reading method to reveal the components of the city in an alternative emotion-oriented method, uncovering psychological qualities which is composed of play, passion and freedom instead of boring aspects of capitalist everyday life such as; work, efficiency, time schedules and banality. At that period Debord was going to paint the following to the bank side of Seine soon was going to be a remembered slogan of the group: "Never work!" [87]

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85 Matthews, Jan D. *An Introduction to Situationists*. The Anachist Library, (2005). www.anti-politics.net.

86 Ibid.

87 Wark, Mckenzie. *Correspondence : The Foundation of the Situationist International* (June 1957-August 1960). Semiotext(E) Foreign Agents Series. (Los Angeles Cambridge, Mass.: Semiotext(e) , 2009), 5.

3.2 Foundation of the SI

> First, we believe that the world must be changed. We desire the most liberatory possible change of the society and the life in which we find ourselves confined. We know that such change is possible by means of pertinent actions.[89]

To be more effective in building a new way of everyday life, a culturally more active group than the LI was needed. They had been decided to be more involved in the cultural domain to get effective on destroying it by playing the Situationist game. Therefore, they had courage to leave the "fringes" of the culture they were enjoying for some time.[89] In 1957, the SI was founded in a little Italian town Cosio d'Arroscia with Debord as the secretary member whose position was mostly responsible for the SI's official publication, *Internationale Situationniste* (IS), a journal which was designed and edited carefully unlike the LI's flyer *Potlach*.[90]

The SI's members were multi-national, in total the group had seventy people with an average active members between ten to twenty until their official disband in 1972. Annual conferences were organised to bring members together. Their journal IS was published in Paris once or twice a year until 1969. It was prepared collectively at the early phase of the SI, then by mostly several people, and at the latest phase mostly by Debord.[91]

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[88] Debord, Guy. "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency" ed. McDonough, Tom. *Guy Debord and the Situationist International : Texts and Documents*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press), 2002, 29.

89 Ibid, 6.

90 Ibid, 7.

91 Matthews, *An Introduction to Situationists*, 9.

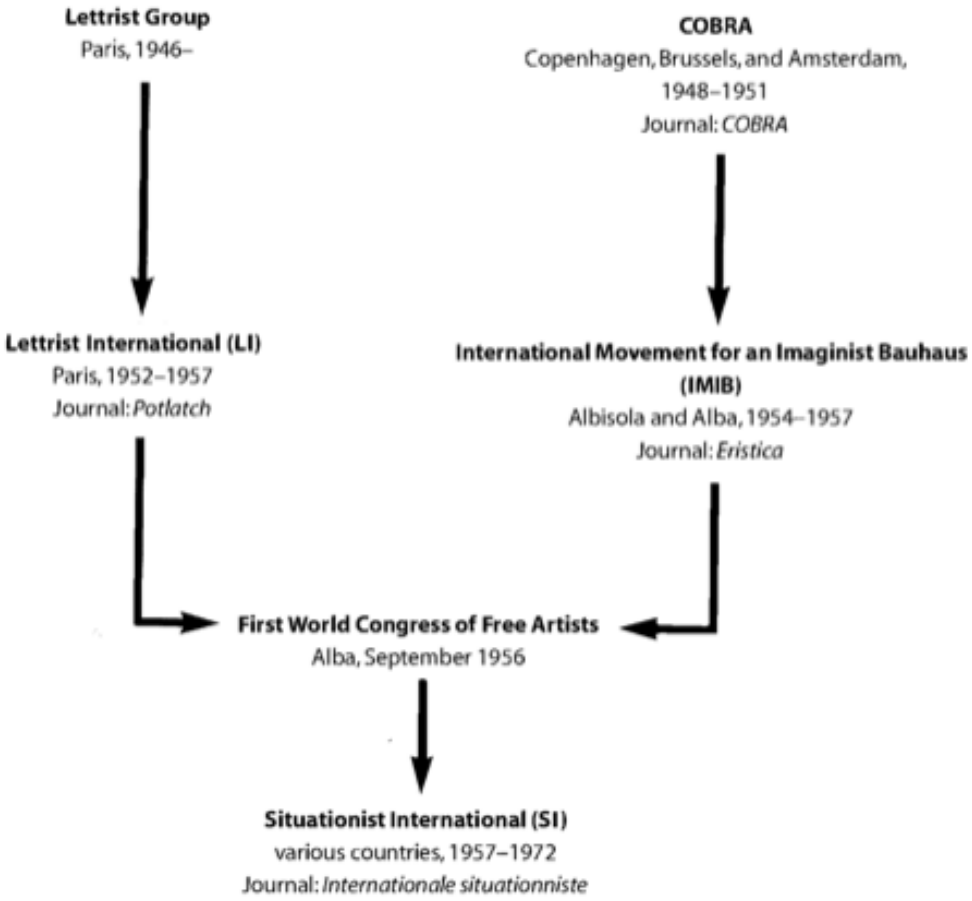

Figure 1: Merged groups to constitute the SI

Debord as the secretary member had zero tolerance to the members who were not doing their best in terms of contribution and their individual political stances. Members were banished easily, they were expected to live against the capitalist practices by every possible manner.

Debord was seeking a new kind of collectivism for the SI. Being against the literary property is a proof of that. The SI indicated that all the works produced by them can be used without permission and without indicating any references. They embraced the culture as a collective property, property of no one. Despite being compared with orthodox party communism, Debord was strictly against melting the

SI into a doctrine. Defending doctrinal postures was a sound reason for expelling a member.[92]

This anti-doctrinal character of the SI was stemmed from the ultimate objective of the group which is to cause fundamental changes to pre-existing societies. In order to do that, the SI tried to stay away from any kind of fixed ideologies, for them, any loyalty to those modes of thinkings would be failure for their objective. Thus, Debord articulated the crisis caused by those ideological positions. Governing recently developed means of production and campaign to create a global productive nation are the results of that crisis. In addition, culture and other superstructural components became the representation of controlling the social measures by power. Capitalism had been managing to lessen contradictions by reformist actions in developed countries. However, Debord affirmed the struggle of underdeveloped countries against imperialist states for their potentials to realise "the questioning of power."

Debord then, stated bourgeois methods of recoding opposing ideologies and artistic forms that respecting them and take them in pragmatic manners eliminating its critical tones, seemingly supporting, capitalism reproduces itself without a noticeable clash with defiance. In cultural domain which is under strict constraints of ruling class, new is accepted through inferior, altered forms. In cultural domain, it is always possible to distort perception.[93]

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92 Wark, *Correspondence : The Foundation of the Situationist International*, 7-9.

93 Debord, Guy."Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency," *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. ed. McDonough, Tom, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press) 2002, 29-31.

3.3 Negativity of dada, Surrealism and Negativity of the SI

Beginning from the traces of Lettrist International, there are two views of the same chronicle. One is the connection of the SI with dada, since the original Lettrism was founded and directed by a poet who was heavily inspired by dada and Surrealism. However, after the Debord's faction which was on the extremities of the sanity could not co-exist with the original Lettrism. Eventually those two groups were separated to track their distinct course. Still, it is likely to assert that the origins of the SI still lies on modern avant-garde, namely dada and Surrealism.

The resemblance between the SI and Surrealism are fundamentally one. They are both critical to modernism. Nevertheless, the SI was expected to be active in political, cultural and sociological realm. The SI preferred to study everyday life of modern modes of living, the fundamental levels of life, on the other hand Surrealism's critique stayed on a theoretical level which was mainly directed at the art of modernism. This is not to say Surrealism did not mean to attack everyday life of pre-existing structures. It did however in a literal and indirect way, by using merely the tools of art in the domain of art. Thanks to Debord, the SI purposefully followed a holistic approach. Debord deliberately explained this attitude, and implicitly called for a wholesale attack to the current system instead of acting in only one of the domains:

> Of all the affairs we participate in, with or without interest, the groping search for a new way of life is the only thing that remains really exciting. Aesthetic and other disciplines have proved glaringly inadequate in this regard and merit the greatest indifference.[94]

Andre Breton, the founder of Surrealism was a prominent role model for Debord before the formation of the SI. Palais Idèal -which is an extraordinary setting, an assemblage with huge in scale with sorts of landscapes and illustrations from

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[94] Debord, Guy. 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography.' *Situationist International Anthology*. edited Knabb, Ken (Berkeley, Calif.: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981).

geography books, a collection of irrelevant architectural elements, the absurdist scene built by a French postman Ferdinand Cheval- had been done by Andrè Breton in 1931, 24 years before Debord. For Breton, Palais Idèal was a flawless spatial configuration to reinforce critique against the post war architecture obsessed with functionalism. Debord's visit to Palais, which is an anti rational, anti functionalist space, was one of the first remarks of the SI's critique of modern architecture and urbanism.[95]

At the closing of 50s, the SI published an article that condemns a retrospective exhibition of Avant-Garde arts which will be held in Marseille. Returning to the critique of Tafuri, it can be assumed that, the SI is well aware of the intrinsic problem of avant-garde arts and its relation with capitalism. They blamed them for repeating bygone forms in spite of claiming otherwise and their inability to constitute a new art that can agitate existing cultural domain.

On urban scale, Breton envisaged a map of Paris created with personal perception of the city according to repulsion and attraction. By this way, he determined the blacks and whites, producing an alternative map of Paris depends on not only morphology but also characteristic moods of different urban pieces. This is the main idea lies behind "psychogeographical" map of Paris created by Debord with four sections of Paris connected each other with arrows. It is called *dèrive*, wandering through the unique "ambiances" from sections to sections of the city.

Hence, there are undeniable connections between Surrealism and the SI. What Debord did is transforming an artistic tool developed by Breton to a political critique. *Dèrive* is used to develop an alternative urban theory and eventually a practice. The SI avoided to get stuck in austere artistic domain and they used every means to harm the system.

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95 McDonough, *The Situationists and the City*, 3-8.

Debord in an article he wrote in 1955 explained why avant-garde movements tried to destroy existing artistic values. He proclaimed that it did not interrupt social development of the bourgeois hegemony. Their motivation was rather based on contempt, a contempt that was not written on opposition and this is the main reason of their failure to achieve their ideas in other than aesthetic domain. The inability to create unusual forms caused by their obsessed determination of destruction of the values they had been using. Those avant-gardes got into a vicious circle, failed to contrive "new emotional states" out of their proposed new values.[96]

As proved by many articles, even the earlier ones, it is now possible to assert that the SI was built on the awareness of the failures of previous generation of avant-garde. Even though there are connections and inspirations taken from those generation, the SI reinvented every one of them to amalgamate all, to unitary urbanism.

3.4 The Spectacle and the Everyday Life

Alienation

The Spectacle is a key concept for the SI, it is a subtle and idealised criticism to capitalist every day life and it can only be comprehended with Marx's alienation exegesis in his *1844 Manuscripts*.[97]

Marx reveals alienation from many different means of political economy. He points out labor's reification, it becomes commodity in capitalism, merely a thing to be bought and sold, a component of means of production. Therefore, worker -through forced labor- works to keep up his physical existence. He does not work with his

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[96] Debord, Guy. "The Great Sleep and Its Clients." ed. McDonough, Tom. *Guy Debord and the Situationist International : Texts and Documents*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press), 2002, 21-23.

97 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

free will, he works because he has to. His labor is objectified, it is transformed into another commodity in estranged conditions.

“Man”s nature does not belong to the workplace “he” is obliged to go. “He” does not only sell “his” labor but also “he” give up “his” freedom, “his” free will. “Man” is neither directly linked with his needs nor “his” product anymore. “His” labor is related with means of the needs, with money. What worker produces is not “his” product, it is someone else’s. With division of labor, worker is reduced to a cog in the machine. “He” is only aware of the one portion of the product, “his” own division in the organisation of the labor. Worker’s labor becomes relatively unconscious.

Hence, “man” is disconnected from “his” nature, intrinsic values and from “his” self as a result of his alienated labor by giving all his efforts to the product that “he” has little control over it. At the end, all of “his” contributions are to make another private property for the private owner. All of “his” accomplishments serve to devalue himself, since the more “he” creates, the more the capitalist earns. As an inevitable result of all, “man”s estranged life activity, “his” labor make “him” alienated from “his” “species-being” since “man”s labor reflects “his” reality, “his” everyday life condition. The sprit of “man” is ruptured and corrupted due to forced labor.[98]

Even avant-garde cannot bypass this infrastructural situation. Therefore, alienation is a primary concern to overcome and it is felt ultimately in everyday life. There is a reciprocal relationship between alienation and the dullness of everyday life in bourgeois society. What is happening in everyday life is above the theory and philosophy because this is ongoing reality, the real conditions that Marx had stressed frequently. All aspects of everyday life and alienated relationships have spatial footprints, namely on the city constructed with ‘modern’ needs and bourgeoisie domination.

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98 Lefebvre, Henri. *Critique of Everyday Life*. (London ; New York: Verso, 1991).

The Space and Time of Banality

Those footprints are visible in everyday life and the importance of everyday life is indicated skillfully by Henri Lefebvre in his book *Critique of Everyday Life*.[99] He stresses the two prominent changes at the beginning of the twentieth century. He claimed there had been two kinds of bourgeoise, one of them is petty bourgeoise lived with a relatively narrow vision, conservatism and restricted morality. Haute bourgeoise, on the other hand, superseded the former with immorality rather than reinventing new values and it engenders "a kind of intellectual sensuality." With finance capital and its liquified capital features, bourgeoise transcended itself with a more independent from the former values. Therefore this 'freedom' had triggered an artistic boom Lefebvre claims.[100]

The second change Lefebvre mentions is about noticing the importance of everyday life. Bodily needs and desires appeared in contemporary art and thought in an acute manner. However, the true critique of everyday life can only happen in left because it depends on knowledge. To make it clear, he picks writing of history. If only the actions taken by kings and famed characters are told, it conceals the reality and the everyday life of the people. The reality lies in the foundation of everyday life of ordinary personalities, the miserable life of the peasant or boredom of proletariat. These are the facts of life, we should leave the spiritual dimensions, instead we should examine the unremarkable objects, "the shape of fields or of ploughs." Hence focus on the everyday life instead of seemingly large events is a "shift from appearance to reality,"[101] a reality that it could be utilized to generate a formidable critique of hegemony.

> On the almost stagnant waters of everyday life there have been mirages, phosphorescent ripples. These illusions were not without results, since to achieve

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99 Ibid.

100 Ibid, 104.

101 Ibid, 135.

> results was their very *raison d'etre*. And yet, where is genuine reality to be found? Where do the genuine changes take place? In the unmysterious depths of everyday life. History, psychology and the science of mankind must become a study of everyday life.[102]

Alienation and estrangement are ongoing processes in the everyday life level. It happens everywhere, on all spaces individuals persists their boring lives, They are struggling continuously between the life they cry for and the life enforced to them. The lot capitalism created are combined in the everyday life. It is the common ground for all aspects, especially the urban space.

Lefebvre describes the acute problem of everyday life appeared by the cessation of colonisation. That led to semi-colonization of main lands of colonisers except the cores of decision making. This geographical shift brought an alteration of class formation. Proletariat became dispersed with the rise of bureaucratic system. With this economical and geographical changes, organisation of everyday life come to be a necessity. To achieve that, everyday life was fragmented to little pieces such as leisure, private, working. This made controlling everyday life easier for the political economy. Everyday life now became the medium of not only production relations but also "programmed" consumption. This configuration could not be realised without its spatial arrangement, the urban centres were "written" to support the that general idea.

City then, became an austere order of a huge machine works with "timetable" to fit those changing needs. Everyday life was proportioned and divided. Time and space got under strict control via everydayness. Lefebvre argues that everyday life[103] is the "screen" to read the essence of the society. This tenacious instrument is able to

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102 Ibid, 37.

103 Critique of everyday life have been existed in kernel since the beginnings of Marxist thought. On The German Ideology Marx and Engels stated the necessity to "leave philosophy aside." The study of the society has to be the study of the actuality, ongoing life, everyday life. This is all about actual people and their actual lives, their "material conditions."
Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology*. (Moscow,: Progress Publishers, 1972).

veil the “tragedy” of life, it serves distractions and most importantly “situations,” obscures and renders itself banal. It may seem falsely as a superstructural agent, though it becomes the structure itself, it is lived and perceived. Every lived aspect has a manifest correlation with everyday life.[104]

As Lefebvre points out, space is a social product, the practices of space production is not independent from social parameters. Besides, the relationship between society and space is a reciprocal one. Society cannot be real without its space to exist in and space can only have value regarding with social qualities.

In the most condensed space of capitalist accumulation, in metropolis, every billboard, every show glass of stores, leisure activities and all aspects of non-workplace impose consuming conventions and behavioural patterns. Therefore, post-war capitalism transformed urban space into an apparatus to reproduce exploitation and boredom outside of the work place too. Lefebvre states: ”[Y]ou are being looked after, cared for, told how to live better, how to dress fashionably, how to decorate your house, in short how to exist; you are totally and thoroughly programmed.” [105]

Everyday life has a twofold nature. On one hand, it is the direct representation of commodity fetishism; on the other hand, it provides a practical arena for revolutionary action. It is the realm of the struggle of all kinds. If revolution does not postulate to overcome the boredom of capitalist everydayness, it will lose its relevancy. What is happening in everyday life is the indisputable reality, it is the sum of “lives of real people in real time and space, coexisting with other people in real time and space.” [106]

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[104] Lefebvre, Henri. “Excerpt From Everyday Life in the Modern World,” *The Situationists and the City,* ed. McDonough, Tom [in Translated from the French.]. (London ; New York: Verso), 2009, 218-221.

105 Merrifield. *Metromarxism*, 79.

106 Ibid.

This is the exact spot where Tafurian critique cannot be not valid anymore for the SI, because the primary aim of their struggle is to change the everyday life.The SI had not lacked theoretical and artistic suggestions, but they intentionally aimed at the real life, real people and real space. The importance of the SI lies in their attitude of endeavor to change everyday life, they did not played merely on the theoretical realm of politics. The spectacle concept has to be considered regarding their emphasis on the everyday life.

The theory of spectacle and spectacular society are coined by Debord in his master work: *The Society of Spectacle*. Debord answers capitalist production relations with a reconsidered critique for modern capitalism. Marx stated: “The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as "an immense accumulation of commodities,” [107] Debord answered him: “The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as "an immense accumulation of spectacles,” [108] he was stressing the irreversibly broken connection between reality and man. Now the false representations present itself as the pure reality.

By using this route, he attacks the present urban space deeming it as the organised space for the needs of the ruling class. What is perceived in the city are the productions of a “false consciousness” and “illusions” to manipulate the behaviours of the society. Urban space -like all other productions of modern capitalism- is a twisted reality. In the end however, it is real because it is lived at the level of everyday life.

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[107] Marx, Karl. *Capital. Volume I*, edited by Friedrich Engels, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1867).

108 Debord. The Society of the Spectacle. Thesis#1.

3.5 Romantic City Versus Modern City

One of the fundamental differences between modern avant-garde and the SI is their attitudes towards the past. Both dada and Surrealism wholly rejected previous values. They aimed to devalue all the former values. Debord on the other hand had a romanticists attitude, not in the sense of nostalgia, rather he internalised it for the critique of bourgeois society. Since that kind of society had crushed the past values with extreme materialism, boring planning, bureaucratic control and systematic oppression over people.[109] Ambiguity and playfulness of the previous periods were diminished.

Debord rejected crude reason as the only source for creating cultural values. His attitude was never regressive. As romanticism condemned a world order based on the quantities while destroying communities, Debord agreed this critique and called the bourgeois society as "a society without community." [110]

What Debord was against is the modernist myth that the modernity has achieved or has to achieve a radical break with the past. Debord had not supported anti-modernity as post-modernity defended. Instead, Debord sought a different kind of modernity. The modernity project had to be something else he thought, not merely "scientific," cold and boring. What was found by Romantic Modernist was also embraced by Debord, the idealized Middle Ages,[111] in which the social relations were relied on more direct interaction between people, no harsh division of labor, and as a result of that, no alienation.

Constant went back to the old towns in a similar fashion with Debord. He examined what society had lost with the dominion of the Modern urbanism. He

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109 Löwy, *Morning Star: Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia*, 99-100.

110 Ibid, 101.

111 Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity-An Incomplete Project" *The Anti-Aesthetic : Essays on Postmodern Culture*. edited Foster, H. J. (New York: New Press, 2002).

states that the built environment of both ancient and modern are incapable of creating new, emancipating structures. For him, bourgeois life form dominated the urban space with car, transforming old forms such as streets to freeways. The leisure is based on comfort at home deprived of playful activities.[112]

3.6 Commune and the SI, the Festival

Between 1945 and 1960, a great number of immigrants came to France, that 46% of the population were coming from other lands. This was the time when the worker quarters were torn down and pushed away from the old center of Paris. The tireless urbanization of Paris was nothing but ghettoizing the working classes and reorganization of Paris with the new needs of capitalist development.

Therefore the SI was born into this ruthless urban reconfiguration which was also named as neo-Haussmannization.[113] Paris Commune was a crucial point of departure for the SI. What both the SI and Lefebvre was seeking was the recapture of the city by the Proletariat as happened in the spring of 1871. That short interval was the instance of direct-representation and the festival (*fète*) of working classes since they were emancipated from the constant oppression of the government and the ruling class. The SI was studying the Commune, to dissolve what was occurring on urban level.

To them, the Commune was the amalgamation of festival and the revolution. What obtained from the case could be used to knock down the elemental phenomena of alienation: everydayness. By reactivating the festival of revolution, the antithesis of modern urbanism were to be created that aimed to remove barriers between the

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[112] Nieuwenhuys, Constant. "Another City for Another Life." *Internationale Situationniste*, 1958.

[113] Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann was commissioned by Napolèon III, and he was responsible for expansive rebuilding of Paris between 1853 and 1870. He was criticized by leftists such as Lefebvre for his urban reconfiguration for the needs of bourgeoise. He created wide and straight boulevards for easy manoeuvring of army of the authoritarian regime and to prevent barricades of rioters. He demolished old quarters of working classes causing class separation.

actors of society and parameters of the class segregation which was associated with modern urbanization.

Figure 2: The Photograph taken during Watts Riots, re-captioned by the SI

The attitude of the SI towards the riots of Watts[114] in 1965 was a good example of their understanding. The riots were violent and involved burning of buildings and looting. Times magazine featured a photograph of a burning store and captioned it: "Pillaged furniture store blazing out of control." After seven months, the SI published the same photograph with a different caption: "Critique of urbanism." For the SI, it was the seizing of the capitalist city by the lower classes, and this was the festival soul of Commune that interrupted everydayness of capitalism. By this way, everydayness, and the disparity between labor and leisure will be ended.

[114] A segregated African-American neighbourhood of Los Angeles, USA.

Ordinary people are going to realize themselves as subjects again by realizing their authentic needs.[115]

[115] McDonough, *The Situationists and the City*, 25-28.

CHAPTER 4

THE INVENTION OF THE TOOLS TO EXAMINE THE CAPITALIST CITY

4.1 Notes on "Formulary For a New Urbanism" Introduction to a Critical Urbanism

"SIRE, I AM FROM THE OTHER COUNTRY" [116]

"Formulary for a New Urbanism" is written by Ivan Chtcheglov[117] (under his pseudonym Gilles Ivain) in 1953 (when he was just nineteen) and it is a major inspiration for the theories developed by the SI. It is rather focused on social space and it is the foundational text for unitary urbanism.

He begins with boredom that is felt because of the current urban configurations. He thinks it is full of the ghosts of the past, it is stuck within the bygone times. The city, had been stuck to physical geography and suppressed emotional characteristics of urban space. This physical aspects of the city conceals the original meanings of the space. For him the city has to be rebuilt from the ground up by reconsidering emotive effects of space.

Chtcheglov points out that architecture has to trigger dreams and enhance our dream lives, our imaginations. The modern inventions suppressed our environmental reality. There is no darkness, there is artificial lighting; there is no

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116 Knabb, Ken, and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress). *Situationist International Anthology*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), 3.

117 Ivan Chtcheglov was sent to a psychiatric clinic. In the 9th issue of the IS, it was written that his imprisonment in the asylum has to be assessed as " one of the modern society's increasingly sophisticated methods of control over people's lives..."
Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology,* 371.

seasons, there is air conditioning. With those modern interferences, people are getting even more alienated to its own nature and cosmos. This is pushing people away from their dream life as they are getting away from the reality, because dreams stem from the reality, Chtcheglov claims.

Modern art reacted that in a quite cold and boring way, with extreme abstraction. This cold architecture with "ephemeral beauty" and styling is just a fashion. His proposed urbanism however, -with the technological advancements- proposes ever changing decors depend on the desires of the inhabitants. For instance a residential unit which will be at the seaside in the mornings and retreats to the forest in the evenings, allowing vegetation with movable walls and gaze of rain and stars through glass ceilings or a mobile house moves with the sun.

He asserts that the banality of everyday life and modern commodities superseded the genuine human desires, although at once they were meant to satisfy this needs. The technological achievements in the production of goods promised to free people from material concerns. On the contrary, commodities become the focus themselves. Now human desires have to be freed from the world of commodity and the new desires have to be found. To accomplish this task, architecture, time, space and architecture have to be reconfigured to become the tools for engendering dreams.

Chtcheglov admires the spatial qualities of the works of painter Giorgio de Chirico, who heavily influenced surrealists with his metaphysical period, was given as an example for time-space, absence-presence schemes. His paintings propel immaterial qualities of space. It emancipates human thought with essentially emotional and visual freedom playing with spatial constraints and temporality of space. Chtcheglov is suggesting an architecture just like that, it will be empty ready to filled, without any prescriptions, but should be open to anything. He extends his attack on crude rationalism as such "Everyone will live on his own cathedral" he states, Chinese and Japanese gardens designed to live in. This is a crucial moment,

an opportunity to rethink architecture in terms of its potential emotional and inspirational qualities which had become impotent with modern architecture.

He defines a city built with a kind of architecture where dweller come across with various types of feelings. He resembles this kind of city with baroque, a city filled with castles, grottos, lakes, etc. He does not refer to the historical period though. Instead, he refers to the essence of the baroque. He divides this future city to several sections, however not according to their functions, but by their emotional and experiential categorisation. He calls them Quarters: Bizzare Quarter, Happy Quarter, Tragic Quarter, Death Quarter. He does not propose how to plan a city or another sort of rational scheme, prescription, he suggests a city consists of "an arbitrary assemblage."

What might be seen here is a hysterical burst of a young man against the boredom of the modern city. However, this piece marks the beginnings of a new political activism that demotes the functional zoning. He proposes a total disorientation, complete spatial freedom, thorough emancipation from material worries. Space loses its all authoritarian organizer of the society. Inhabitants, instead of settling, will continuously wander in this imaginary city. They will perform *dèrive* constantly.

4.2 Psychogeography and Dèrive

The Man of the Crowd

Dèrive is an experimental method for psychogeographical inquiry of certain portions of the city. Psychogeography, although there is also an Anglo-American tradition, its Francophone roots lies in *flâneur* and Walther Benjamin and Charles Baudelaire.[118] It all had begun with a short story of Edgar Allan Poe[119] which was

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118 Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 59-60.

119 Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Project Gutenberg.

referred by both Benjamin and Baudelaire at the birth of European wanderer *flâneur.*

Poe's short story is consisted of portrayal of a section of London told by a mysterious narrator. He is at a coffee house, observing an extremely busy street, people are pushing each other to reach the other end. He analyses men who are acting in patience to deal with their important business and others in a disturbed rush, clerks in exquisite clothes, incognito pickpockets who look like gentlemen, desperate gamblers, Jew pedlars, exhausted young women on their way to an unhappy settlement. The narrator is a meticulous observant who sees every detail, every nuances between characters, their gestures and the various meanings of the expressions on their faces. As night comes to London and started to be filled with harsher people, he stays and continue to scrutinise the street. He is almost invisible and the reader know nothing about him except his recent recovery from a heart condition and his weird skill for deep, precise analysis at a glance.

After this long observation of the crowd, he is focused on an old man and what he analysed surprises him that he decides to pursue him through streets, bazaars, shops and a square while following this aimless wanderer of the modern city. The man he pursues bears no object. He has nowhere to go. He just strolls, and frequently turns back to where he had just come from. At last the narrator has to stop this man with absolutely no aim. He does not even notice him, he just goes on wandering London. The narrator gives up following him, "he is the man of the crowd" he sighs. Nothing can be learnt from this man. In the crowd, everyone looks the same devoid their differences. They act like Simmel's[120] statement of being the cogs of a huge machine. They are rendered as the same by the modern city.

Meanwhile, Poe's story reveals the change in behaviours of the people depending on the section of the city they are in. He offers an alternative reading of the city. Though, as Benjamin asserts this method is not relevant anymore, with

[120] Simmel. "The Metropolis and Mental Life."

Haussmann's rearrangement of Paris, *flâneur* is belong to the past times. As industrial age capitalist apparatuses alters the city, it becomes a wild environment, alienated and estranged. With modern interventions the wilderness is domesticated with urban plans such as Haussmann's that brings privatisation of the public spaces, traffic terror and limiting walking due to restriction to the pavements.[121] However, Situationists believed that it is still a very effective tool to survey a city. They based *dèrive* on performing random wanderings as *flâneurs*.

Psychogeography

Psychogeography, explains Debord, is the analysis of emotions and behaviours of individuals depending on particular geographical conditions either they are created consciously or unconsciously.[122] In the city, there are zones different from each other -not by means of function but emotion-wise. They invoke various types of feelings due to unique psychic ambiances they engender. Caused by these, during purposeless wanderings (*dèrive*), some paths seem to be less resistive, some repulses. All these aspects cannot be explained only by architectural style, era they signify, or income level of its inhabitants, it is more than that. It can summon endless capabilities of distinct feelings by blending them comparable to chemical compounds, consists of various basic components yet metamorphosed to something else.[123]

Geography is a science deals with the natural phenomena, climate, soil properties, economical conditions of a chosen terrain, and their correlations with social consequences. Debord implies that psychogeography has a similar scientific approach. It is a methodological study researching psychological effects imposed

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121 Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 60-65.

122 Before explaining psychogeography, Debord defines which topics does geography cover? For him, psychogeography is as sound as geography as a branch of research. Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology*, 5.

123 Ibid, 6-7.

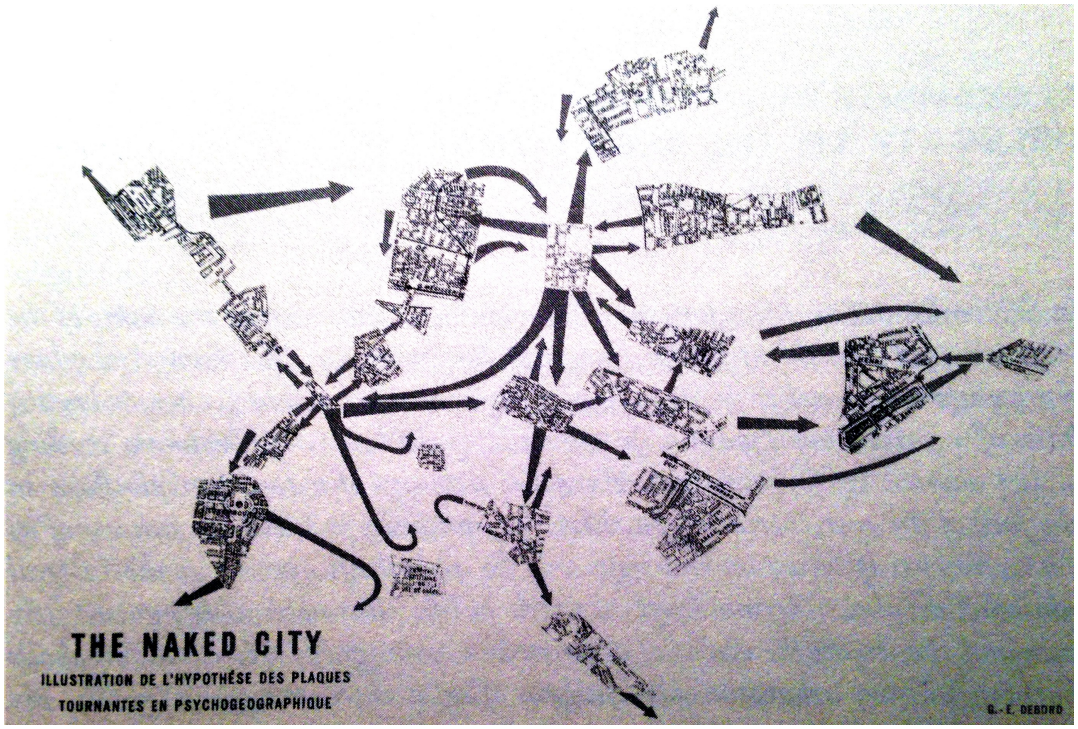

Figure 3: "Naked City," Guy Debord, 1957

upon the individuals due to urban surroundings.[124] And *dèrive* is conducting a psychogeographical survey akin to being *flâneur*, however this time it is transformed into a technique rather than merely wandering.

In IS #2, Debord explains *dèrive* in detail. He contrasts *dèrive* with a journey which has pragmatic purposes. The person who is going to engage in drifting should be free from any obligations. The daily routines, work and even leisure activities have to be neglected and he should let himself to be attracted by geographical attributes of the subject environment. The fate of the route is left to chance. Debord warns not to underestimate the chance factor, because city has strong repellant and attraction zones. There are intrinsic geographical forces that would shape the route of *dèrive*.

124 Ibid, 5.

Dèrive is a dynamic process, it is a "transient passage through variant ambiances." Though, psychogeographical expedition does not merely rely on built environment, the social climate is essential. It is carried on ideally within a time frame between two sleep times, alone or with groups of several people that would allow to exchange experiences by exercising simultaneous *dèrives*. The overall definition is extremely broad, it can be focused to study emotional aspects of a long stroll or a specific terrain, the range may be the whole urban fabric of a city including suburbs or merely a block of housing or completely spontaneous. *Dèrive* is a sort of topographical experimentation devoid of prescriptions. It does not engender certain results. The method itself is being formed and reformed during the experiment. For instance, one of the procedures Debord explains “Possible rendezvous,” calling a person to a place at a specific time with no one to come to the rendezvous, to excite interactions of the subject with other people within this chosen place and derive alternative readings of that area.

One of the most significant characteristics of *dèrive* is that it belongs to urban space. Debord accused four Surrealists for being foolish for their attempt to wander countryside aimlessly. In countryside, chances to encounter with unexpected events is notably lower. Outside the urban parameters, *dèrive* can only be ridiculous, one of those Surrealists Pierre Vendryes discussed random places of tadpoles in an aquarium. Debord states that these experiments are only valid in industrially advanced cities. It should be applied to man-made since the city is the man’s “very landscape is alive.” [125]

By drifting, one would locate the variant ambiances of an urban environment. Debord suggest a new layer of the current urban mapping, on top of the topographical strata, behavioural plot of the ever-changing physical and emotional structure of modern city is generated by this method.

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125 Knabb, The Situationist International Anthology, 122.

One of the best examples of psychogeographical analysis is *The Naked City*[126] published by International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus which is one of the components merged into the SI. *The Naked City* is an outcome of potential *dèrive* session of Paris, featuring nineteen sections of the city connected each other with arrows which are called turntables.[127] Similar to railway's, subject drifts from one ambiance to another with those turntables. The movement is defined with the railway along the atmospherically fragmented segments of the capitalist city. It distorts the uniform appearance of the Plan of Paris, because it is in fact fractured according to the ambiances they create.[128]

Thus, *dèrive* is not just an exploration method. It would be used to create fresh atmospheres of the city by first marking and studying the current ones. It is the pre-conception of a "classless" and "borderless" urban environment, namely the "unitary urbanism."[129] The major difference of *dèrive* is wandering in the everydayness. The situationists thought that it is more important to deduce various meanings of the street rather than a paint in an art gallery. At the end, streets of city were considered to be the space of struggle. It had the potentials of revolutionary movement and atmosphere of festival, open to surprises, difficult to estimate.[130] *Dèrive* at the end, was an instrument to achieve unitary ambiances, purposefully created without concrete intentions. That method and its abstract data would lead to Unitary Urbanism.

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126 The Naked City is the name of a Hollywood movie shot in Manhattan Island, New York. It implies that the actual phase of the Paris is pictured instead of its false impression of unity of Plan de Paris. McDonough, Thomas F. "Situationist Space." *October* no.67, (1994): 61.

127 "Plaque tournante" also means "a railway turntable". Ibid, 60.

128 Ibid, 64.

129 Knabb, *The Situationist International Anthology*, 50-54.

130 Sadler, Simon. The Situationist City. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1998.

4.3 Unitary Urbanism, to Destruct, to Reshape

Lefebvre indicates that in the 19th century, social sciences was fragmented and tried to understand "reality" in their own domains in contrast to philosophy which sought to comprehend an extensive reality. After a century he states we are still not sure if those sciences succeeded or not by using their own isolated systematics.[131]

While building, those "fragmentary sciences" intervene to the process defending their special positions, Lefebvre has his doubts about how those sciences create a unified "a science of city" or what are their shared "strategy." That leads to a paradoxical theoretic situation, philosophy as only seems to come up with a fused understanding unless it is relatively liberated from the context, or the separated premises without a unifying skeleton. He asserts that thinking there is no "urban reality" but there are only interconnection between already fragmented relations would mean the repression of the "subject." Thus, to grasp the urban reality, absence of the separated sciences is a necessity.[132]

So far what specialists[133] did is to reach a global approach to explain urban reality was to deduce it by taking an isolated portion of that reality and approach it with an arsenal exclusive to that discipline. Or rather, philosophers jumped to conclusions without satisfying legitimization. Planning he states, turned into a social practice, a practice dares to declare being about the whole society with the help of fragmentary sciences.[134]

Lefebvre adds, planning practice becomes a dogmatic ideology. It stemmed from the ancient Greek utopias, that it tends to base itself on Greek cities and its 'free'

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[131] Lefebvre, Henri. 'Fragmentary Sciences and Urban Reality' *Writings on Cities*. (Cambridge, Mass, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 94-96.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Lefebvre refers the professions those have isolated area of work.

[134] Ibid.

citizens.[135] By using this particular knowledge (since agora was only for noblemen and it excluded other classes) the philosophers of the city reached more general deductions and prepared prescriptions for planning.[136]

This ideology of prescriptions has two correlated components: mental and social Lefebvre claims. Scientific management of Taylor is dominated as the example of using organisational methods based on improvised rationalism. The second is that this ideology so far, has subordinated time and existence. It managed to presume formulations of social problems with transforming all "history and consciousness" to space problems. [137]

Unitary Urbanism appeared as a holistic approach to human reality, a similar approach to what Lefebvre defines as a science of city. It is a critique directed to modernist urbanism's ideology, and its proposals are meant to initiate a prominent role for play.[138] Unitary Urbanism and critique of Constant -who is a painter and former CoBrA[139] member- was not particularly against the modern production methods. Conversely, Constant points out the necessity of using machines to create new methods for building environments which successfully merge the artistic essence with the physical domain. Constant explicitly points out the inefficiency of

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[135] Lefebvre, Henri. 'Philosophy o f the City and Planning Ideology' *Writings on Cities*. (Cambridge, Mass, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 98..

[136] As Le Corbusier initiates the urban problem with the correlation between human and nature. His reductionist urban theory claimed to be the recipes to resolve functions and spaces. That led "planning ideology" to deal mainly with circulation and network complications such as planning of roads and infrastructure. With those prescriptions, it sets itself as the absolute fact.

[137] Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities*. (Cambridge, Mass, USA: Blackwell Publishers), 1996, 94-99.

138 Heynen, "New Babylon: The Antinomies of Utopia," 25.

[139] CoBrA was an avant-garde art group formed by Karel Appel, Constant, Corneille, Christian Dotremont, Asger Jorn, and Joseph Noiret. Name derived from the hometowns of the artists: Co (Copenhagen), Br (Brussels), A (Amsterdam).

the traditional arts and he makes his call to invent new understandings in all areas to establish Unitary Urbanism.[140]

The development of Unitary Urbanism has begun in 1953. Unitary Urbanism was defined as one of the major interests of the SI.[141] The SI renders their urban theory progressive and ever-changing, Unitary Urbanism has to criticise every discipline and reject their separations, all disciplines are going to be evaluated and amalgamated to create a revolutionary "terrain of experience" for future societies. Although functionalism clashes with traditional styles, the SI accuses functionalism for having a conservative attitude against criticism. This property makes functionalism to have avant-garde attributes, but at the same time, as a reaction to that, it turns into a dormant theoretical body due to imposing of its applications fiercely and broadly. Instead of functional and sheltering priorities, one should create environments for strolling freely, in the mood of "daydreams," the SI insists.

The Amsterdam Declaration[142] which is written by Constant and Debord consists of eleven points elucidates Unitary Urbanism. The SI is based on the theory that art should be created with a holistic approach to stimulate collective creativity. The "minimum" objective of the SI is to achieve "decors," for researching and deriving new modes of behaviour and by this decors, unitary urbanism will be constructed. The chronic problems of city (traffic, housing, recreation etc.) can only be addressed with a method that combines social, psychological and artistic theories focusing daily life.

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140 Constant, *Guy Debord and the situationist international*, "Extracts from Letters to the Situationist International," 75-76.

141 Situationist International. "Unitary Urbanism at the End of the 1950s." *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 3 (December 1959).

142 Niuwenhuis, Constant. Debord, Guy. "The Amsterdam Declaration." *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 2 (December 1958).

The existing city evokes passive spectacle, the subjects are watching, not engaging/ participating to happenings in the city.[143] Unitary Urbanism aims to provoke contribution and play with lots of leisure time. With technology of the modern era, they claim, it is possible to produce a never-ending gaming experience on urban land as long as this technological tools are freed from supervision of hegemony of a dominant class.

Unitary Urbanism tends to change the way of everyday life, it does not contemplate another meaning for life. It anticipates that the life itself is the goal of the life. It is not concrete, rather dynamic. It is based on the true needs of human-beings, that would create another kind of culture by collective artistic effort. It imagines to change the accepted codes, the lifestyle and the production practices of physical environment of the city that will release dynamic building processes.

While creativity and art is a core element for Unitary Urbanism, it does not trust in conventional art forms of current cultural domain whose artwork is watched by spectators who have unfulfilled lives to visualize higher values. Contemporary art is associated with timelessness, on the other hand what SI envisaged is ephemeral, ever-changing and open to all possibilities.

Therefore, the theory of Unitary Urbanism envisioned a city where all dwellers would continuously drift, not settle. Their attempt is to create a fluctuating spatial configuration in which the society is united with the structure of the city, as Fourier's phalanstery tried to embody a socialist system within mega-structural unity. Unitary Urbanism was after a *Gesamtkuntswerk*,[144] the SI believed which is only possible "at the level of urbanism." However, they rendered the previous attempts to unify the arts under the supremacy of architecture obsolete. Unitary

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[143] For instance touristic museums and tour busses. Object is merely watched and consumed. There is no interaction between them. This is exactly what the SI rejected.

[144] An artistic work that attempts to exercise many forms of art. Widely known to be used by opera composer Richard Wagner.

Urbanism attempts to merge all elements of human life, it was strictly against any kind of ruling formalism or prime aesthetics.[145]

Yet the SI denied that Unitary Urbanism is a reaction to functionalism.[146] Rather they stated that they wanted to past it behind, transcend its constructive aspects such as the new production methods, comfort, lack of embellishment. Modernism had achieved some success, but now it was time to move on. For the future cities, new experiments had to be conducted to imagine the "social space" of the future societies.

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[145] Sadler, Simon. *The Situationist City*. (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 117-118.

[146] "Unitary Urbanism at the End of the 1950s," *The Situationists and the City, ed. Tom McDonough,* [in Translated from the French.]. (London ; New York: Verso), 2009, 99-103.

CHAPTER 5

SITUATIONIST SPATIAL EXPERIMENTS

5.1 Utopia, Heterotopia and The Locus of the SI

Before New Babylon had emerged, the modern city had been a long time focus of the SI. They believed that the metropolis was the ultimate representation of alienation and the habitat of passive spectacles. Their ambition to "construct situations" and 'Unitary Urbanism' are the theoretical foundation of New Babylon. Creating spaces without a written future, ephemeral spaces as lived in Paris Commune…

The solution to bypass exploitation relations, alienation and boredom was to create this kind of spaces, with an immense emphasis on play and integration of art into the daily life of ordinary people as a reaction to traditional arts that distinguish spectacle and artist. Their ideal space is space of an ongoing "performance" and its inhabitants are "performers." Audience and players would be a whole. Since the years of the LI, they were aware of the agitative theory of avant-garde theatre of Pirandello, Brecht and "Theatre of Cruelty" of Antonin Artaud. This was the initiation of seeking for diminishing distance between the audience and the stage. Despite their differences, they all supported a new kind of reality in theatre.[147]

To open up a stimulative discussion, Foucault, in 1967 pointed out the relationship between time and space.[148] For him, space was still fragmented, sacred and considered in terms of "oppositions" such as the fissure "between private space and

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[147] Sadler. *The Situationist City*. 105-107.

[148] Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Article,(1967). http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html.

public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work." Unitary Urbanism tried to address this fragmented understanding of space.

Foucault began with the unreality of utopia. Utopias are idealised spaces constructed with social concerns. However they are dead-born in a way that philosophically they contradict with reality. Their existence is built with no place as built with good place. There are other kind of spaces established between real place and no place. They might be realised but their connection with other real spaces is entirely different. Foucault explained it with mirror analogy: Mirror constitutes a utopia because it reflects a "placeless place." The reflection of a mirror is a false view. However, it also exists in reality, the mirror is real, physically it stands there in relation with all adjacent spaces including the subject who gazes at the mirror. Those spaces which have this kind of relation with real and unreal are called as heterotopias.[149]

Before New Babylon came up, situationists were after a synthetic architecture made by *dètourned* components against fragmented architecture of current built environment and their interests are surprisingly well overlapped with several perks of Foucault's heterotopographical examples.

Situationist architectural theory was interested in ancient structures, not in the sense of travelling with "banalizations of travel agents" [150] but in the sense of heterotopia, for example Pyramids can be considered as such. As Foucault stated, pyramids are isolated, enacted utopias built for a very special reason. It is also a cemetery which are the structures made to accommodate remaining of specific individuals, recalling wanderings performed by the situationists in catacombs of

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[149] Ibid.

[150] The SI considers the touristic tours as a representation of the passive spectacles. Tourists do not typically engage in the environment. On the contrary, they gaze at the monuments, take pictures, consume it and leave.

Paris. They proposed strolling in Paris metro at night. Trains are stopped, tunnels are abysmally lit, a situation open to the unpredicted. This is the definition of an enacted utopia. It would be a dètourned spatial configuration which is originally built for very pragmatic reasons, but transformed into a volume for amusement.[151]

The SI's endeavour to put several things and feelings together may be considered in terms of third principle of heterotopia. Several unrelated components would be put together like in a garden as Foucault pointed out, to create something else diverse from those components. "The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the bringing together of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater efficiency" [152] situationists claimed. Those unrelated components would generate unexpected relationships between them. This specific trait of heterotopia "of superimposed images" can be also seen in Debord's movies which are consists of series of images and motion pictures. They considered modernist abstraction as the dull mass produced aesthetics of capitalism. Built environment however, ought to be built with a synthetic unity of bits and pieces.

5.2 Urban Planning, Pragmatism and Its Critique

Raoul Vaneighem compared two independent nuisances of post-war times. For him, public housing and Nazi concentration camps were comparable, stating that if Nazis knew modern urban planners, they would not build camps but mass housing. They serve to the same objective: total submission. The latter however, does not induce hatred or sharp reaction, it appeared to be upright, that is why mass housing is the perfected form of the "death camps." [153]

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[151] Sadler. *The Situationist City*. 109.

[152] Ibid, 108-110.

[153] McDonough. "Metastructure: Experimental Utopia and Traumatic Memory in Constant's New Babylon.", 89-90.

Constant defines “ludic society” as an alternative to “utilitarian society.” For him, capitalist and socialist states organizes to exploit people’s labor. He asserts that so-called social justice is not enough to provide freedom or provoke creativity. Ludic society is the exact opposite of the utilitarian one. It is not based on productivity, it is based on freedom and it is the only way of creating a true classless society Constant states.[154]

After the wars, Constant claims, cities were change drastically due to overgrowth of the population and technological overhaul.[155] The urbanists tried to address the social problems of the new city were failed to do so. Even, they contributed to extend those problems by gathering pragmatic and ephemeral solutions which were focused on the aesthetics. What Simmel had declared on the fundamental anxiety of the society[156] was reinforced by the urbanists.

Constant stated that considering family as the core element for mass housing was a foundational mistake since it was ignorance of the changing moral values and the deficiency of family phenomenon had to be declared long time ago due to new social configurations that the life in city created.[157]

The climax of pragmatist urbanism was the Athens Charter,[158] Constant argues. Urban planning was divided into four functions: living, working, transport and recreation. Constant criticised their division of zones for demoting the cultural and social considerations. City’s capability of accommodating a creative society was

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[154] Nieuwenhuys, Constant. "New Babylon." edited by Gemeente Museum Den Haag. The Hague, 1974.

[155] Constant. ‘Unitary Urbanism.’ *The Situationists and the City* [in Translated from the French.]. ed. McDonough, Tom. (London ; New York.: Verso), 2009, 112-113.

[156] Simmel.“The Metropolis and Mental Life.”

[157] Ibid.

[158] Athens Charter was prepared by CIAM (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne) in 1943 which was led by Le Corbusier. It is considered to be one of the most important written documents on Modern architecture and planning.

not regarded. He asserts that they might be aware of this over-mechanisation so urbanists tried to attempt to compensate the dullness of envisaged built environment with green belts and recreational areas. In fact, urbanists main objective is to build a city that would serve to the productional needs of capitalism: :the efficient transport of workers and goods, to the accommodation of people and the storage of wares, to industrial and commercial activity." Creativity and life of inhabitants on the other hand are "optional," it is out of the main equation.[159]

Ebenezer Howard's Garden City was also harshly criticised by Constant. As mentioned before, Situationists are not supporting a regressive argument against technology. Constant considered Garden City as an illustration of "fear of machine," which is a nineteen century response to industrial manufacturing methods. Reactions followed the critique of John Ruskin, tried to return to the earlier days when manual labor was prevailed. However, Constant saw the potentials of technology that might be used to emancipate society from unpleasant labor.

Constant was strictly against the doctrine of pragmatic division of city life: living, working and recreation. He constructed dichotomies based on play and creativity: not workman's tool (machine) but artist's plaything; not culture but "game of life."[160] The public functions of street and its change according to modern life is a good example for that. Its historical role was a lot more than axis of transportation, it accommodated diversity of social encounters such as bargain of open markets, carnivals, political protests, an ambiance of a cafe overflowed through the street. Though, it is regressed to be an axis of isolation between private living quarters, inversely now, it became a tool of alienation, it has lost its previous privilege that used to get people together and make them interacted with each other.

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[159] Op cit. 114.

[160] Ibid.

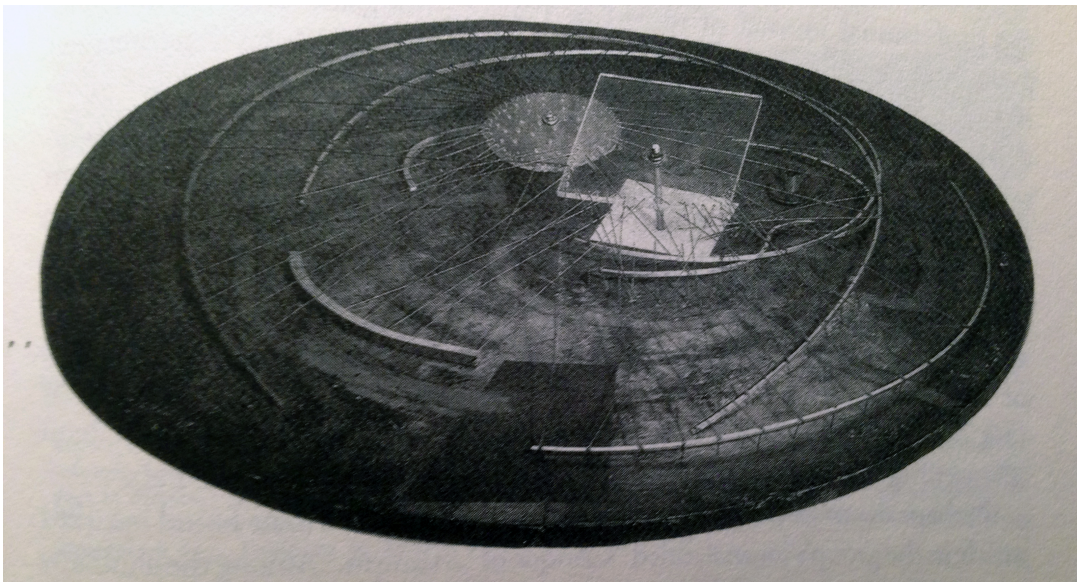

Figure 4: "Project for a gypsy camp," Constant, 1956-58.

Traffic was regarded as one of the ultimate signs of breaking the city into zones with freeways and the traffic of private cars. Situationists did not believe that the car was the elemental evil, but they condemned reckoning it as the central design component of a city. Debord believed that the car problem was not only about the transportation, it was more about the word of happiness to buy a car advertized by the advanced capitalism. Private car is the epitome of "an alienated life." As Le Corbusier considered the transit time as the stolen time from the leftover leisure. Instead, Situationists stated that it should have been an enjoyable duration, not a boring interval spent in congestion. In the near future, they believed, "collectivity-private," "work-leisure" chasm will be broken and the motor-car will be disappeared. That was why urban planning had to consider the future and should have not been focused to this transitory period. The ones who wants to continue to value the motor-car and the current traffic solutions are the ones who want to retain the existing social configuration.[161]

[161] Debord, G. "Situationist Positions on Traffic." The Situationists and the City, 141-143.

5.3 Babylon, The Origins

> 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.
>
> 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.
>
> 21:9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.
>
> 21:10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.[162]

New Babylon is an urban prototypical project led by Dutch avant-garde artist Constant. After he had met with Asger Jorn, he was interested in experimental side of avant-garde arts, that led him to co-found Experimentele Groep of Holland in 1948 with two another artists; Corneille and Appel. This group then, merged with Danish Experimental Group, Asger Jorn to form CoBrA. After Constant left CoBrA and he had been living in Paris and London. He was thrilled with the post-war conditions of these cities. His observations of postwar rebuilding of Paris inspired him to do experiments on architectonic models in 1950s such as *Ambiance de jeu* which was an abstract model to study space in artistic forms. Just before he joined to the SI, between 1956-58, he had worked on an experimental model for gypsies, which was a settlement for Romani people.[163]

Ancient Babylon is the father of modern city with its 'spectacular' existence, with its walls, tower and the monumentality. The collective labor to construct its tower

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[162] "The Bible, Old and New Testaments, King James Version."

[163] McDonough, Tom. "Metastructure: Experimental Utopia and Traumatic Memory in Constant's New Babylon." *Grey Room*. (2008), 86-87.
Sadler. *The Situationist City*. 122.

resulted in segregation of people and its eventual doom. As in the Biblical references, Babylon is the city of prime evil, it is godless and the place of perverted. Ironically, New Babylon will be the modern, "technological, universal playful" [164] city of future. The prior theoretical accumulation of the SI was merged with Constant's own ideas and experiences.

5.4 A City of Nomads

Constant's Gypsy Camp model which he made in 1958 was one of the starting points of New Babylon. The Romani people who were sheltered by Italian painter Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio were the inspiration for the model which was expressing their free lifestyles with its level of abstraction, lack of entirely closed spaces and mobile walls to adjust changing population of the camp. He acknowledged the nomadic characteristics of Romani people, he did not create housing for them, rather he produced open spaces without boundaries. One of the reasons of his approach should be linked to the post-war pragmatic housing to answer sheltering problems as quick as possible which was the case for Constant's hometown Amsterdam.[165] Taking Gypsies as the core model was a reaction to mass housing, he thought that people should be freed from all liabilities of property and location.

Those Romani people used to camp in marketplace in Piedmontese town of Alba, every Saturday. They lit their fires and establish suspended tents, used leftover materials of traders. Since their camp had to be cleaned after they had left, town council prohibited them to come to marketplace, in recompense, the field owned by Pinot Gallizio was shown to them. In this field, Romani people defined their space by putting caravans, petrol cans and other materials side by side. This inspired

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[164] Sadler. *The Situationist City*. 122.
Merrifield, "GUY DEBORD, THE CITY OF MARX AND COCA-COLA" *Metromarxism; a Marxist tale of the city*, 99.

[165] McDonough. "Metastructure: Experimental Utopia and Traumatic Memory in Constant's New Babylon.", 87-89.

Constant as they created their camp instantly outlined with moving elements. His "Gypsy Camp" was based on this temporality, flexible space, inhabitants without any belongings including the place.[166]

5.5 The Essence of New Babylon

Since 1950s, the collapse of World Wars and their impacts on the cities had always played an important role throughout artist's lifetime. He assured that those pity conditions made his themes more political.[167] Constant observed a ruined Paris and London due to the brutal post-war effects by practicing "man of the crowd," or *flâneur*. This observations influenced him to get involved in architectural forms instead of crude expressionism of CoBrA. In 1955, he had already begun experimenting with spatial forms that he made a geometrical assemblage which stands between architecture and abstract art titled 'Ambiance of play.' Then his well-known *Gypsy Camp* model in 1958, was an attempt to amalgamate "art, architecture science and environment." [168]

The beginnings of New Babylon is synchronous with the initial aspects of the SI that are mainly created in Alba, Italy, in 1956 and Constant was there to provide a lecture. New Babylon is an expansive and progressive project to complete the notions of "unitary urbanism" which is mentioned several times above. However there was a difference of thought between Debord and Constant. For Constant, New Babylon's objective was to accomplish the physical manner of unitary urbanism to enhance the social formation. Debord, on the other hand, perceived it as a point of initiation and one of the many fields the SI should be working on.[169]

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[166] Constant, "New Babylon," 1974.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Sadler, *The Situationist City*, 123.

[169] Heynen, "New Babylon: The Antinomies of Utopia," 25-26.

New Babylon and the SI's thoughts on city must be understood in terms of what Lefebvre called "experimental utopia." It is not pure empiricism nor random assumption, it is rather infinite criticism which surveys all alternatives, unceasingly open to new explorations. However, this is not limited to mere imagination. It reinvents the tools to realize alternative urban space by practice. Lefebvre evaluates experimental utopia that evades to two extremities: Study of the "real" conditions and deducting pure empirical data to apply to whole domain and unadulterated utopia devoid of the association with concrete elements. This is one of the significance of New Babylon, being an "experimental utopia."

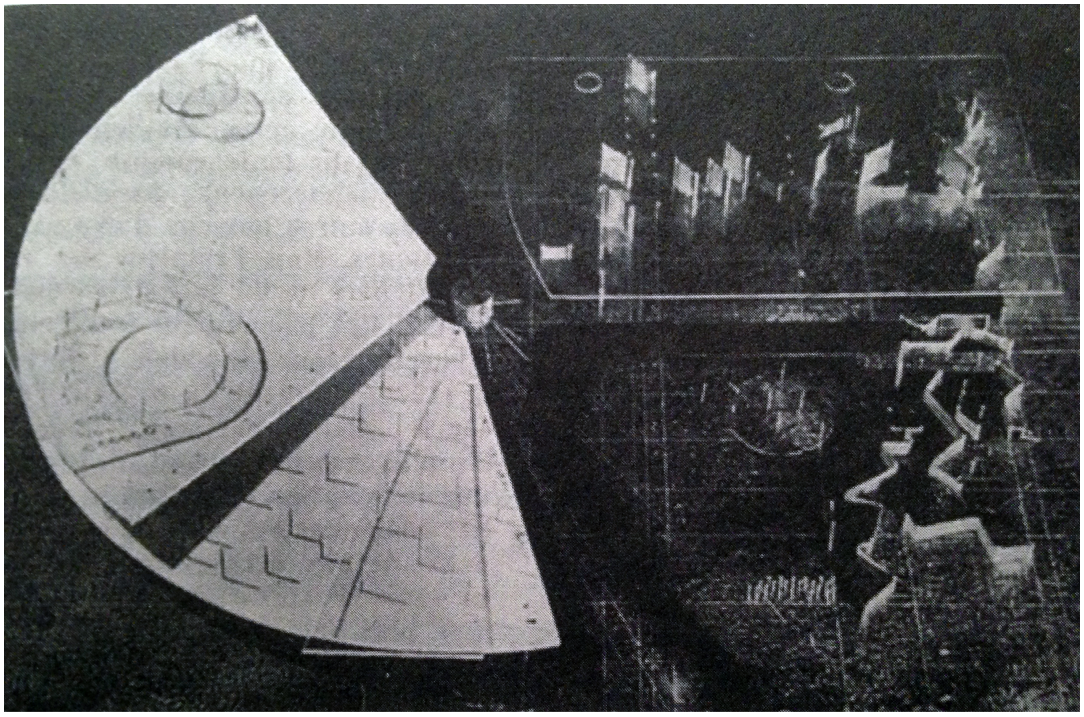

Figure 5: "Model of Yellow Sector," Constant, 1960

Constant's experimental utopia envisages a completely different mode of life. In this city which will eventually disperse to whole surface of earth, people do not work at all thanks to infrastructural technologies handling monotonous toil. New Babylonians are able to change the properties of the spaces and the atmospheric qualities. Whole city is built to play, it is not built to work. It is the opposite of the

current city which supports hierarchical relationships between people. New Babylonians are free from any kind of repression and property. Nomadic life is promoted, every aspect of the city is temporary.[170]

Constant points out a certain fear from the machine that lowers the time of work and increase leisure time. Inevitably he asserts, technology will come to a grade the society will be free from dull labor and the whole life will be of free-time. With the technological structure Constant envisaged, the people who are freed from work would participate with creative labor. In addition, inhabitants are free to change movable architectural elements to create ambiguous spaces, or namely 'situations.' In this way, art and everyday life become attached.[171] What Constant did was not to elaborate New Babylon over time, it stayed as an imaginary project and it never had definitive boundaries. It was a guide to inspire for building a new world, not a prescription he claims.[172]

The theoretical foundation of New Babylon: Unitary Urbanism, as Constant sees it, is to achieve atmospheres to nourish "an interplay between environment and life" with the psychogeographical methods, and emphasis on "social space". Psychogeography as explained in detail above is not only about documenting the effects of various ambiances on human behaviour,[173] it entails the methods of provoking creative behaviour by setting artificial scenes. That will eventually result in creating a true social space.

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[170] Ibid, 28.

[171] McDonough. "Metastructure: Experimental Utopia and Traumatic Memory in Constant's New Babylon.", 84.

[172] Sadler, *The Situationist City*, 123.

[173] Nieuwenhuys, Constant. "Unitary Urbanism." *The Situationists and the City*, 119.

5.6 The 'Sector'

A sector is the most basic element is connected with sectors to constitute New Babylon. It is composed of superimposed planes linked to each other with vertical components in macro level (since Constant describes them as macro-structures) that permits inhabitants to change interiors (micro-structure) at the greatest level of independence. A sector is a "playground of homo-ludens" without any kind of fixed spaces except several service cores. The macro-structure is intended to be a "neutral" container. On those horizontal surfaces of sectors, there are movable panels which are lightweight and reusable to allow changes in spatial qualities easily. New Babylon is a city without a prescription from its designer. It is the antithesis of the current city design.[174] It steals the role of architect to create urban space, New Babylon returns it over to the inhabitants to define social space.

The Yellow Sector is a prominent epitome to explain New Babylon. It is the last contribution of Constant[175] to the SI before his resignation and it is relatively a concrete definition of his utopian city construction. The Yellow Sector is one of the playful sectors, and it is hung with high tech metal structure and it is does not contain definitive spaces. In Constant's words, it is the "the complete suppression of volumes." There are five levels of planes, two in the West and three in the East without any volume definers. He claims a space with ultimate interchangeability and flexibility. At first glance it may be seemed to be a concrete definition of the sector as mentioned before, but in architectural terms it is still fairly abstract with its planes, transparent floors, corridors and adaptable walls that are all utilized to create ambiguous atmospheres. The levels are air-conditioned and artificially illuminated to contribute playfulness, and in some occasions, inhabitants are exposed to natural conditions.

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[174] Nieuwenhuys, Constant. "New Babylon."

[175] Constant. 'The Yellow Sector,' *The Situationists and the City*. ed. McDonough, Tom. (London ; New York: Verso, 2009), 123-25.

This promising critique of modern architecture being said, there is the other face of the coin. In his writings, Constant lent an incredible amount of credence to future technology. What Constant argues is the total disintegration of human-beings from natural conditions which he considered as obstacles to human desires. In his description of sector is gigantic that sunlight cannot penetrate in and climatical changes cannot be felt inside. The all climatic factors are under control of technical equipments operated by the inhabitants to create alternative circumstances, provoking various sensations.

5.7 City of Homo Ludens, The New Babylonians

Homo Ludens[176] is a concept coined by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga.[177] He claimed that play did not stem from culture. It is even prior to any civilization. The ancestors of Homo Sapiens[178] know play as nearly all animals play each other. Since the Enlightenment, play has been tried to be understood with scientific method and quantification due to Age's obsession with rational thought and man has been considered to be Homo Faber.[179] Huizinga states that animals are makers too. The play element however, has been neglected to be as important as reason.

As an 'evidence' of priority of play, Huizinga gives example of playing dogs. They call each other to play by certain gestures and sounds, they do not really hurt each other within the rules of their play and they act like they are furious during the game. Therefore, the play element is ages before the ancient civilizations. It cannot be restricted to the realm of human-beings, it is much deeper and it is impossible to explain it using merely the rational methods.

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[176] Man the player. Homo means 'the man.' Both are Latin.

[177] Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens; a Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction London. (London,: Routledge & K. Paul, 1949), ix,1-3.

[178] Man the wise. Sapiens comes from *sapere* in Latin for 'being wise.'

[179] Man the maker. Latin.

The scientists so far, Huizinga states, tried to understand the rationality of play. They thought that play functions for the preparation to the real life, it is related with "imitative instincts" and it provides physical loosening afterwards. Though, play is a lot more than the needs and the functions. Because the fun element in play is already irrational. Huizinga claims that the reason is not able to explain the gambler's ambition, loudness of football fans during a match, or happy cry of a baby.

> Animals play, so they must be more than merely mechanical things. We play and know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational.[180]

Homo Ludens is one of the most important concepts for Constant and Debord to constitute their critique of modern city planning. With Homo Ludens, Constant rejects that humans are completely rational existences. He condemns Homo Faber and claims that it is even more ill-judged concept for understanding human-beings. Play, on the other hand is the essence that humans and animals share. In the current society, only the wealthy classes can reach a certain level to live Homo Ludens. Constant believes that, with technological achievements, a larger portion can be transformed to Homo Ludens and prioritize being a social actuality.[181]

Debord, before the SI was formed, declared the importance of play for their understanding of architecture. He states that the preexisting life makes people to comply with false needs via spectacles it creates. Huizinga's theories about play and its cultural aspects initiated a shift against boring life components of capitalist mode of living. The play element has to be provoked by the synthetic built environments he insists.[182]

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[180] Ibid, 4.

[181] Nieuwenhuys, Constant. "New Babylon." edited by Gemeente Museum Den Haag. (The Hague.: 1974.)

[182] Debord, Guy. "Architecture and Play," *The Situationists and the City* [in Translated from the French.]. (London ; New York: Verso), 2009, p.46-48.

Thus, Constant strongly associates New Babylonian with Homo Ludens. Huizinga's concept is a salvation, an escape from the alienation. Hitherto, people are reduced to their "outputs," degraded from work and exploitation relations. This of course, would demand a fundamentally contrasting urbanism to unleash the real freedom and creativity.

Constant ranks freedom as a crucial part of being New Babylonian. Yet he mentions that the concept of freedom has to be united with the practice of freedom by provoking creativity of "every human-being." His insight is to liberate the overall constitution of society from all functions to release human-being to be the maker, that will lead them to be purely "the creator."

To achieve this, Constant lists three core constituents: (1) the "non-productive" labor by advanced technological infrastructure, (2) "collective" distribution of lands and the means of production to divert energy of the people to creative labor, and lastly (3) the unlimited "free time" demoting capitalist scheduling of the life and living by the "clock." New Babylon then, addressed not only liberating space but also time. Capitalist conditions reproduced itself by strict controlling of time and space, as well as their social outputs. In New Babylon there is literally no constraint on time and space that aims to set society utterly free, giving chance everybody to create their own lives. Those proposed circumstances Constant believes, will induce a nomadic life, an endless journey aspired in lieu of duties. Conventional towns were built around those duties, bludgeoning its inhabitants to move accordingly, most of the time to use a portion of the city with the shortest way between house and workplace except a small amount of deviation.

In New Babylon, Homo Ludens will be engaged in worldwide nomadic activity, there is no prescription of relationships or moral codes between people. New Babylon is open to unexpected events which are not controlled by utilitarian objectives. This new urbanism does not anticipate fixed population, it fluctuates constantly. A New Babylonian does not have submissive properties of a tourist, she

does not spectate, but engages into spatial configurations to change it continuously. Constant resembles this of being a painter with full of colors (meaning the technological facilities) who are completely free to create varying forms. In New Babylon's case, art is produced collectively and together, it is anonymous and produced socially. Art's individualist nature does not exist in New Babylon, it is shared spontaneously. The created situations will be changed after another, and the perception of time has changed due to the "rhythm" collectively generated.

Aggressivity is inevitable in New Babylon, because there is no supervision or prescription. Nevertheless, aggression comes from the provocation of survival instincts. In preexisting world order, every person struggles to exist. When those conditions are omitted, people would be able to reveal their creative urges Constant argues. He stated that it never happened in history so far. Constant associates aggressive behaviour with power. Especially, affluent classes protect their material existence and properties with aggressivity. The current system of utility withholds creative forces to maintain the organisation of money economy and exploitation relations.[183]

As observed above, the two different paths chosen by urban revolutionary movement by the SI can be connected with heterotopia. On one hand, the SI tried to discover current heterotopias by utilising their unique way of wandering in the city: *dérive*. This path did not offer projected results as Constant did with New Babylon. It was uncertain and afraid of losing authenticity of their revolutionary thinking. They left the decisions of future to the people despite Chtcheglov's descriptions of ideal space, they did not desire to insist a defined future city. Constant on the other hand, had created a city based on the urban theories of the SI and his own contributions. New Babylon was a rough estimation of what lies ahead after revolution.

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[183] Nieuwenhuys, Constant. "New Babylon."

CONCLUSION

HOW SITUATIONIST CRITIQUE IS STILL RELEVANT

At the foreword to French third edition of 'The Society of Spectacle,'[184] Debord indicates that he had not changed any word of the book since its original release. He says he is not someone who corrects himself, rather this kind of critical theory shall not be changed unless the overall conditions of this historical period collapses. Therefore, the essential qualities of modern and capitalist life have not changed, there are changes but they are actually incremental rather than revolutionary. This paper defends that as long as those fundamental qualities exist, situationist attitude continues to be a relevant critique against the capitalist urban development, the life it imposes and its methods of production of space.

It is possible to claim that the critique of SI transcends Tafuri's analysis of avant-gardism. All of the efforts of the SI are for destructing the existing way of living deliberately and changing it on the level of daily life. For this motivation, they had tried to create an alternative way we might be living without any prescribed routine. As mentioned throughout the paper, urban space is the platform of social struggle. It is not a coincidence; from More to Fourier, radical thinkers envisaged ideal social spaces to engender better lives and address social problems.

The struggle at the end, always happens in large cities of concentration of oppressed people as Paris Commune and more recently occupy protests suggest. The tools the SI applied for urban analysis still have meaningful uses. By studying the SI and the reading tools they contemplated, as designers and architects, we may

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[184] Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. (New York: Zone Books), 1994.

presume that the current situation of the cities and the life in it is not the only alternative. The SI's way of thinking shows us another path, not yet very much discovered.

All progressive/critical utopias may share a similar purpose. As More done for the original Utopia, a portrait of a further city contrasted with the current city. Eduardo Galeano stressed this aspect of utopia, that it is at the horizon and it retreats as we go towards it, but it forces society to progress. This is exactly why New Babylon and the SI is still important, that civilization has not walked through this horizon yet. Lefebvre's Experimental Utopia bears exactly the same motive: "the exploration of human possibilities, with the help of the image and the imagination, accompanied by a ceaseless criticism and a ceaseless reference to the given problematic in the 'real."[185]

However there is one preference this thesis walked through. Deliberately, the importance is given to concepts rather than variety of models and drawings of New Babylon. Unitary Urbanism was against any kind of prescription. When a utopia is visualized in a level that it becomes another kind of prescription against the existing prescription. At that moment, it follows the pattern Tafuri criticized. It attempts to put down the hegemony which prevails and builds further dominant ideology.

When utopia is visualized, it is transformed into a perceptible prescription. It may retain its critical tone but also it possesses a danger to fall into, as Soviets did, it began as an independent utopia, then it turned to be another dominant ideology. Old hegemony replaced with a newer one. This is where Unitary Urbanism's true value lies. Intentionally, the core concepts of the SI had preserved a antagonism toward any kind of rigorous prescription.

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[185] Henri Lefebvre, "Utopie expérimentale: Pour un nouvel urbanisme," Revue française de sociologie 2, no. 3 (July–September 1961): 192.

The example of USSR seems like a relevant example as they had an anti-urban programme and how they failed to address the urban problem. What they did was following a certain ideology in a strict manner, a crystallised form of socialism. The whole state system of USSR can be interpreted this way. It gave word to emancipate people. It was a utopia and partially enacted. It constructed itself on material world and conflict between agrarian and industrial, city and countryside.[186] It forgot to return to the critical attitude towards itself and the totalitarian position of the state. This was the exact situation the SI had tried to avoid at all costs and New Babylon had failed in this manner. At the end, it became an enacted utopia and ideology through models and drawings. Yet, unitary urbanism steered clear of any kind of ideological crystallisation, it was retained as a solid critique of capitalist metropolis, nothing more, nothing less.

It is impossible to deny organic relationships between the SI and early modern avant-garde art movements. However, this study claims that, unlike dada and Surrealism, as observed throughout the thesis, the SI valued urban space more than any previous avant-garde movements. They believed it is a prominent surface to struggle against capitalism as believed by Marx. Hegemony radiated everyday life trough its spatial connotations, it captured all aspects of our lives. The SI tried to survey them and generated the tools of resistance to transform the existing urban space to challenge the existing ideological reign.

As seen in early utopias, such as Plato's, More's original Utopia or Fourier's Phalanxes, Howard's Garden City they all signify a certain ideology through recreation of social space. One advocated classical Greek democracy, other favoured "original" Christian values, or a model for socialist community. The SI however, tried to arrive nowhere. They did experimented with urban space, but their objective was never to generate a certain ideology, newer or existing. They

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[186] Lefebvre, Henri. The Urban Revolution. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 2003, 109-112.

went after the unexpected and unknown with dialectical methods, despising any kind of authority.

New Babylon was a vast experimentation with the physical qualities of the space. Through the drawings and models, Constant explored the possibilities of spatial configurations and how they would change the lives in the broadest sense. However, as David Harvey points out,[187] although experimenting with the "closure" may engender new imaginations of space, it is hard to avoid its authoritarian overtones. Shopping malls, Disneylands or militia camp can be seen as the realized utopia of the dominant ideology where the life is being experienced differently (this aspect makes them heterotopia).[188] Though, the difference of the SI's perspective is constructed on the 'spectacle'. They claimed they are all the same unless the condition of spectacle is diminished and people start to engage and change the environment.

Hence, the SI went after the feelings of the components of the city. It is the awareness of the heterogenous characteristics of an urban composition. D*érive* is a "heterotopological"[189] analysis. They uncovered the Paris of Haussmann: Fragmented, full of voids with an ideology comes from ancient Rome, proletariat sent to margins of the city.[190] Therefore they had re-read the city, not form the bird's eye view on a map, map was only a tool, they did walked through the city, rediscovered the remaining sections of old Paris and Bonapartist gentrification.

By using their methods, their analysis of space (*dérive*) and ideas to transform it would dispersed, create requirements for spatial revolution and someone else but

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[187] Harvey, David. *Spaces of Hope*. California Studies in Critical Human Geography. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 182-83.

[188] Ibid, 184-85.

[189] A term used by Michel Foucault. It is a "science" which deals with the analysis to seek and grasp heterotopias.

[190] Op. cit.

not them were going to generate alternative spaces. They were trying to trigger that, not to lead it with architectural tools stemmed from preexisting mode of living.

Consequently, unitary urbanism and *dérive* seems to had achieved to transcend the traditional problem of avant-garde. New Babylon might be caught in by materializing the future city after revolution. Than it was transformed to another crystallization. Although it was not quite defined, it was still highly visualized with models and drawings. It can be speculated as treating the land of New Babylon as tabula rasa was a very Modernist attitude. He ignored all established values and forms, but created 'new' ones. Unitary urbanism and *dérive* analyzed existing forms and tried to spot the ones which might have revolutionary potentials. It was not mere philosophy, it generated its conclusions from the real spaces built on urban land and heterotopias as Marx did for his class analysis. Unitary urbanism is still a relative tool for urban researches and architects for being connected to real and seek of revolutionary potentials without imposing a particular ideology. It is wide open to new interpretations of the urban environment even for today.

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