

COMMODIFICATION OF “PLACE” UNDER LATE CAPITALISM
THROUGH TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES

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THROUGH TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES**

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ABSTRACT

COMMODIFICATION OF “PLACE” UNDER LATE CAPITALISM THROUGH TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES

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This study is a critical inquiry into the changing nature of the term “place” under the impact of contemporary capitalism. The aim of this thesis is to explore the commodification process of the “place” in the sovereignty of contemporary capitalism referring to the ways by which the “place” becomes the instrument of capitalist mechanisms. In this context, how the intentions of current financial system convert the very essence of place, the *genius loci*, alongside the domination of place by images, texts, signs and symbols is analyzed. Furthermore, the ways the invasion of place by the system of signs and images and the proliferation of themes and simulations which prevail as the tools to transform the “place” as the “spectacle” are put into question. Ultimately, the current spatial productions, most of which are based on themes and simulations to constitute the spectacle, are discussed with reference to the actual environments of “placelessness” and “non-place”.

Keywords: Place, Commodity, Consumption, Spectacle, Placelessness

ÖZ

ÇAĞDAŞ KAPİTALİZM ETKİSİNDE YER KAVRAMININ METALAŞMASI VE MİMARLIK PRATİĞİNİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ

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Bu çalışma çağdaş kapitalizm etkisi altında “yer” kavramının dönüşümünü araştırmaktadır. Bu tezin amacı “yer” kavramının kapitalist mekanizmaların bir aracı haline gelmesi ve yer kavramının metalaşması süreçlerini incelemektir. Bu bağlamda güncel finansal sistem araçlarının nasıl imaj, metin, işaret ve semboller aralığı ile yer üzerinde hâkimiyet kurarak yerin özünü ve ruhunu dönüştürdükleri tartışılmaktadır. Ayrıca, mekânın işaret ve imajlar sistemi tarafından istilasının nasıl ‘tema’ ve ‘simülasyon’ kavramlarının yaygınlaşmasına neden olduğu incelenmektedir. Tema ve simülasyon güncel mimarlık üretimi içerisinde mekânı bir gösteri haline getirmek için yaygın olarak kullanılmaktadır. Mevcut mekânsal üretim biçimlerinin neden olduğu, mekânsal farklılıklarını yitirerek aynılaştıran ve monotonlaştıran yapıları çevreler, “yersizlik” ve “yer-olmama” kavramları çerçevesinde ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yer, Meta, Tüketim, Gösteri, Yersizlik

To My Family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Definition and Method

The present study is a critical research that aims to explore the commodification process of the “place”, becoming an instrument of capital formations in the contemporary world of capitalism. In other words, it will cover how the mechanisms of current financial system needs to intervene the geographies of capital for the pursuit of profit and income. This thesis intends to search more specifically how the profit oriented mechanisms of capitalism are effective on the constitution process of actual places through architectural practices.

In the first instance, the Chapter 2 covers the critical arguments developed as part of the “place theory” to be able to grasp its significance in the field of architecture. In this chapter, it will be referred to Christian Norberg-Schulz for his phenomenological considerations on place focused around the notion of *genius loci* and Kevin Lynch’s “sense of place” within the framework of his urban design theory based on “environmental image”.¹ Furthermore, the place issue will be reconsidered with reference to David Harvey’s critical analysis on social processes of place construction based on the political

¹ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, The Technology Press & Harvard University Press, 1960, p. 8.

economy of contemporary capitalism. The argumentation of the philosopher Martin Heidegger who considers place as the “locale of human being”² will be revisited by the review and critique of Harvey.

In Chapter 3, the financial dimensions of the issue will be discussed under the title of ‘place as a commodity.’ In this chapter, the interaction between capital movements and spatial organizations for the economic rationalization and efficiency will be analyzed. Its influences on the formation of built-environments will be examined. In other words, it will be concentrated on how the financial and political mechanisms transform places into geographies of capital for producing more profitable accumulation of capital. Afterwards, it will be analyzed how consumption as the basic element of capitalist economy is effective on the organizations of places. In this context, it is argued that the place’s becoming ‘the locus of consumption’ leads to its ultimate self-destruction through consumption of place. Lastly, cyberstores are examined as the non-spatial forms of consumption activity which is definitely disembodied from the existence of any concrete environment.

Subsequently, in Chapter 4, the impact of mass media culture on the organization of places will be discussed. Gradually increasing advertisement for the effective promotion of places will be analyzed. The impacts of advertisement on the transformation of architectural practices are discussed particularly from the perspective of how mass media and advertisement convert the main objective of architectural services to “design of

² Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, translated by Albert Hofstadter, 1971, p. 155.

perceptions”³. It is argued that most of the current architectural production occurs with the concern of designating the perceptions to control the desire of consumption. In this context, architectural conventions as the fundamental parameters to describe the qualification of any architectural object have been replaced by the assemblage of images and media texts. Current taste of the architectural market is mostly determined by the invasion of fanciful images due to the introduction of mass media and advertisement into architectural practices. At this point, currently architecture seems to produce the commodities demanded by the capitalist system by figuring out the consumer profile to match their desires by means of powerful images. While doing this, architecture functions with all the techniques of advertising and image making which is called “integrated design services”⁴.

“Architects who embrace retailing are best organized as “integrated design services firms” providing not only design expertise but also strategic business consulting, branding, marketing, and sometimes even advertising. To design well, architects need to do these other activities well.”⁵

Furthermore, the current architectural services majorly focus on the design of ‘lifestyle’ and ‘identity’ by directing most of their production in conformity with the discourse that emphasizes a ‘new lifestyle’ in each project. Accordingly, the content of architectural design shifts from the production of the built environment as the essential matter of the discipline to the creation of so-called lifestyles. Indeed, the object of architectural design is loaded by

³ Kevin Ervin Kelley, “Architecture for Sale(s): An Unabashed Apologia” in *Commodification and Spectacle in Architecture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2005, p. 53.

⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵ Ibid.

a set of additional values to increase its demand in the market by neglecting the “use value” in favor of increasing the “exchange value”.

In Chapter 5, the notion of place is going to be analyzed with reference to the current taste defined by the capitalist market. It is argued that a metamorphosis of spatial conventions has occurred, leading to a new kind of place what we call here “pseudo-place.” In this context, themed places of consumption are studied as cases where the shopping activity is served to consumers in spectacular way leading to phantasmagoric understanding of place. Eventually, it is argued that the *genius loci*, as the spirit, the essence of place is lost due to absence of spatial distinctions in the uniformly built environment shaped by the capitalist economy of modern world. The notions of “placelessness”⁶ and “non-place”⁷ will be referred as notions to criticize the way contemporary spatial organizations are produced. In this scope, as a themed environment, Viaport Venezia published in the marketing journal titled “Exclusive Homes” will be examined with reference to the place theories and discussions conducted throughout this thesis. Furthermore, the selected projects are going to be analyzed in regard to socio-political and financial processes of place construction. The idea of pseudo-place will be discussed by means of current housing projects which are introduced through texts and images of advertisement. Pseudo identities and lifestyles are stacked in the housing projects implemented in the last decade by means of above-mentioned images and texts with the purpose of being prominent in the competitive terrain of places to produce more profitable accumulation of capital.

⁶ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* London: Pion, 1976, p. 51.

⁷ Mark Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, London and New York, Verso Publishing, 1995, p.45.

CHAPTER II

PLACE THEORIES AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1. Place theories in Architecture

Place as the locus of human activities embodies the phenomenon of everyday life with reference to experiences and memories of a society. According to the phenomenological approach to architecture introduced by Christian Norberg-Schulz, place means a totality of concrete things having material substance, shape, texture and color that altogether constitutes the character of place, which defines its essence.⁸ The essence of place - *genius loci*- is related with its character which is determined by how things are. The character and structure of a physical site are what make it become a certain place that belongs to a specific location under certain social circumstances. These serve a basis for the place investigation in the concrete phenomena of everyday life-world.⁹ In Norberg-Schulz' terms, the structure of place ought to be analyzed by means of the categories of "space" and "character". Rather than making a distinction of space and character, he internalizes a total entity that could be summed as "lived space". While space denotes the geometrical and physical organization of the constituents which compose the place,

⁸ Christian Norberg-Schulz, "The Phenomenon of Place" in *The Urban Design Reader*, The Routledge Press, edited by Michael Larice and Elizabeth Macdonald, 1996, p. 126.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.128.

character denotes the general atmosphere as the basic property of any place.¹⁰ Although Norberg-Schulz defines place as the “lived space”, he seems to put emphasis on the character as the essence of place -*genius loci*. As he asserts, “it is meaningless to imagine any happening without reference to a locality.”¹¹

The emphasis on the “character” as the essence of place is also omnipresent in Kevin Lynch’s discourse on the matter. Similar to Norberg-Schulz, Kevin Lynch’s reflection on place concentrates on the existence of a certain location as the perceived environment by means of senses and experience. His approach is based on a total “environmental image” composed of identity, structure and meaning.¹² Lynch discusses not only intrinsic constituents of urban milieus such as identity, structure and meaning but also how they are perceived by their users. With respect to this, he proposed a reading of urban environments based on images.

“Environmental images are the result of a two-way process between the observer and his environment. The environment suggests distinctions and relations, and the observer - with great adaptability and in the light of his own purposes- selects, organizes and endows with meaning what he sees.”¹³

In the pursuit of spatial distinctions and relations, Lynch concentrates on the concrete structure of the urban environments. In this context, he focused on the orientation of human beings in the urban environment and introduced a

¹⁰ Ibid., p.129.

¹¹ Ibid., p.126.

¹² Lynch, op.cit., p. 8.

¹³ Ibid., p.6.

set of elements to read the constituents of physical urban form that make the visual image of the city such as; “paths”, “edges”, “districts”, “nodes” and “landmarks”¹⁴. Kevin Lynch’s and Christian Norberg-Schulz’ definitions of place are similar in that they both highlight the character and the identity of a site as the essential components to make it become a place, yet Lynch takes the matter a step further by introducing the “sense of place” as a human capacity to perceive the overall identity and structure of a given environment through its physical qualities in regard to the above mentioned set of elements to comprehend the structure of cities as one of the main agents to generate a total city image.

David Harvey asserts a lot about the idea of place by starting with the baseline that “place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct.”¹⁵ In his article, entitled “From Space to Place and Back Again”, he proceeds by stressing the social processes behind the place construction. While Harvey keeps searching on the issue of place, he emphasizes the multiplicity of social agents taking part in place construction. In other words, Harvey argues that the meaning of the term “place” varies depending on distinct disciplinary approaches. Harvey tackles with the issue of “place” by referring to different approaches each associating the topic with different phenomena and scholars leading to an abundance of diverse interpretations. In his discussions, he particularly introduces the issue of space production as a crucial mechanism for the permanence of capitalist economies. Harvey interprets the places in the capitalist economy as the embodiment of capital on a certain location charged with financial or political power. According to

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 47-49.

¹⁵ David Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again”, in *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 293.

him, in the world of contemporary capitalism urban space is perceived by its exchange value as the basic means for capital accumulation and income earning. In other words, the contemporary capitalism continuously seeks for the production of new built environments to invest in and to survive “through geographical expansion into new territories and through the construction of completely new set of space relations”¹⁶. In this context, Harvey states that “the construction and reconstruction of the spatial relations and of the global space economy has been one of the main reasons to permit the survival of capitalism into the twentieth century.”¹⁷

As opposed to Harvey’s perspective of a Marxist geographer, however, the phenomenologist philosopher Martin Heidegger interpreted the notion of “place” as the locus of being by focusing on seeking ways to uncover the truths of human existence.¹⁸ By leaving aside the discussions of world market, he focused on the issue of “dwelling” as the shelter of mankind. In this context, Heidegger was not only interested in alleviation of homelessness by building a shelter but also introduced the state of homelessness in a much deeper sense that subsumed the loss of roots in the modern world. Actually, since Heidegger was a phenomenologist philosopher, his arguments on the topic intensified on the comprehension of the interaction between human existence and place construction. Accordingly he related the human experiences of place with the roots of mankind and, therefore, constructed through time-deepened human memories.

¹⁶ David Harvey, “The Social Construction of Space and Time”, in *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 241.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 299.

“When we think, in the manner just attempted, about the relation between location and space, but also about the relation of man and space, a light falls on the nature of the things that are locations and that we call buildings”.¹⁹

In his attempts to explore the social processes of place construction, Heidegger also dwelled on how the human existence and the need of shelter shaped the organization of spaces and locations with regard to buildings and dwellings as the locale of everyday life.

“Things like locations shelter or house men's lives. Things of this sort are housings, though not necessarily dwelling-houses in the narrower sense. The making of such things is building. Its nature consists in this, that it corresponds to the character of these things. They are locations that allow spaces. This is why building, by virtue of constructing locations, is a founding and joining of spaces. Because building produces locations, the joining of the spaces of these locations necessarily brings with it space, as spatium and as extensio, into the thingly structure of buildings. But building never shapes pure "space" as a single entity. Neither directly nor indirectly. Nevertheless, because it produces things as locations, building is closer to the nature of spaces and to the origin of the nature of "space" than any geometry and mathematics. Building puts up locations that make space and a site for the fourfold.”²⁰

Heidegger's understanding of place somehow responds to Harvey's seek for social processes of place construction. In this sense Harvey, by agreeing with Heidegger, asserts that place construction must focus on the recovery of roots.²¹ It appears to be feasible to declare that by probing the “place as locus of being”, Heidegger intends to explore the nature of human existence

¹⁹ Heidegger, op.cit., p. 155.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

²¹ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, op.cit., p. 301.

through the basic need of sheltering, of locating themselves to place which is constructed through recovery of humanly roots and accumulation of memory. However, such kind of a proposal does not solely suffice for the perception and interpretation of the term “place” in the contemporary world since the culture of modern world possesses much more than the basic need of dwelling and keeping the intrinsic roots to pursue the sense of place. In this context, Harvey criticized Heidegger’s argumentation in that the idea of authenticity and rootedness of the experience of place is difficult in the modern world of the capitalist economy, except some kind of resistance in search for alternatives:

“What Heidegger holds out, and what many subsequent writers have drawn from him, is the possibility of some kind of resistance to or rejection of any simple capitalist (or modernist) logic of place construction. It would then follow that the increasing penetration of technological rationality, of commodification and market values, and capital accumulation into social life together with time-space compression, will provoke resistances that increasingly focus on alternative constructions of place.”²²

Although Heidegger, in his Black Forest farmhouse, concentrates on the authentic sense of place demanding the recovery of roots in concordance with the basic need of “dwelling”, his argument seems to be outdated in the world of contemporary capital in which both dwelling and place are perceived as kinds of commodities.

The French philosopher and urban sociologist Henri Lefebvre theorizing the production of space, emphasizes the social process of spatial production and asserts that space is the locale of everyday life with all sequential activities and interactions related.

²² Ibid., p. 302.

“(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationship in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object”.²³

In this context, perpetual interactions and rituals of everyday life inevitably brings about ceaseless production and re-production of space as a social entity which is always shaped by the phenomenon of daily life. In his argument that considers urban environments as the place of everyday life, space exists by its use value. Reading the spaces of everyday life in terms of their use value, Lefebvre also focuses on the concrete conventions of space such as; form, structure and function as the codes for analysis of spatial organizations.²⁴

Although Harvey often refers to Lefebvre’s concepts and arguments on urban space as a social construct, he points out its exchange value as the basic means for capital accumulation. Indeed, Harvey centers his theory upon financial and political mechanisms behind perpetual production and re-production of space that is also underlined by Lefebvre. However, he elaborates the issue deeper by covering the political economy of place construction within the context of contemporary capitalism. While the city is interpreted as the concrete locus of everyday in Lefebvre’s works, Harvey sees the city as the collage of intangible spaces which can be sold and bought. In the cities of capital, the exchange value of urban space

²³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishing, translated by Donald Nicholson Smith, 1991, first published in French, 1974, p. 73.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.167.

predominates the use value.²⁵ Furthermore, Lefebvre also mentions about the domination and appropriation of space with regard to everyday life in the contemporary world.²⁶ Although he underlined the subjugation of domination over appropriation, most of the current spatial production takes place with the intention to generate power and capital through appropriation of space.

2.2 New Places and Transformations as a means for Power

As has been mentioned before, the way capitalism overcomes the crisis of overaccumulation due to perpetual increase of capital necessitates geographical expansion. By geographical expansion, it is meant both transformation and renewal of existing places and the planning and production of new ones to attract the capital for the sake of its efficient circulation. The processes of capital accumulation actually predominate the production, re-production and transformation of spatial organizations in urban territory. As a result there emerges new networks of places and new organization of social relations on these places. Moreover, this leads to the alteration of both “territorial divisions of labor”²⁷ and concentrations of people. Places that once had a secure status could lose their popularity easily due to rapid transformation of other places or the emergence of new places as centers of attraction.²⁸ Local governments and capital owners as decision

²⁵ H.Tarık Şengül, *Kentsel Çelişki ve Siyaset*, İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2009, p.43.

²⁶ Lefebvre, op.cit., p. 164.

²⁷ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, op. cit., pp.294-295.

²⁸ Ibid.

makers become aware of the competition with other places and they become involved in the competition since they worry about the value and popularity of their own place in comparison with the other ones. The primary reason for this competition is the ability of place to generate both financial and political power since it is the milieu of everyday life such that most of the urban life activities from recreation to shopping and even to protest is hosted by public places. For this reason, keeping the possession of places means to direct the trajectory of urban life. Such an extensive impact of places on everyday life renders them attractive places for power of both political and financial organizations. In this context, urban space seems as the most vital matter of collective power.²⁹ Since both governmental and capital organizations are concerned about power and prepotency, their ambitions on urban places increasingly become evident. By capturing the control of urban places such organizations intend to expand their power domain based on the domination they have over cities.

During this expansion process, power and profit oriented interventions of governmental and capitalist assemblages considerably penetrate the networks of urban geographies. Mechanisms of such institutionalized assemblages interpret and evaluate the urban places for their own benefits in accordance with their own sordid rules most of which are based on the idea to dictate their power and domination. In this sense, the production processes of spatial organizations together with their function in course of urban life are determined by political and financial organizations as the authorities to enforce.

²⁹ Şengül, op.cit., p.16.

As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argued in the *Thousand Plateaus*, “having allegiance to the rules of the political and financial organizations”, the term place becomes a body of the corrupted “institution of assemblage”³⁰ which is prone to self-destruction. Since the strict and sordid norms of institutionalized assemblages are based on the idea of exploitive attitude, institutions ultimately lead to their own collapse.³¹ In case of urban metropolitan life, the proliferation of the capitalist places corresponds to the rising power and authority of the capitalist assemblage which is open to degeneration due to its institutionalized structure for the pursuit of profit.

Following Deleuze and Guattari it could be asserted that institutions of assemblages existing in the organization of state governments function as “criminal machines” and “war machines” which can reach the point of self-destruction³². Constantly rising power of the institutionalized assemblages resembles the authority focused and growth oriented nature of capitalism which inevitably functions as a “criminal machine” leading to its self-destruction through crises.³³ In this respect, contemporary cities are in perpetual process of destruction and construction or re-construction in which the former is always replaced by the latter. In this context Manuel Castells

³⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Becoming-Intense, Becoming Animal and Becoming Imperceptible”, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, The University of Minnesota Press, translated by Brian Massumi, 1987, first published in French, 1980, pp. 234-235.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p.233.

³³ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, op.cit., p.295.

states that “cities are structured and destructed simultaneously by the competing logics of the space of flows and the space of places”.³⁴

Cities with their networks of spatial organizations and territories of socio-political and financial authorities can be described as assemblages of multiplicities in which all the disciplines are related with the complex phenomenon of life, and they have multiple interactions between themselves as well. Deleuze and Guattari criticize and reject the norms and rules of institutionalized assemblages by interpreting them as signs of powers in order to achieve certain unity under the reign of dominant power by eliminating the principles of heterogeneity and multiplicity, a kind of a fascist attitude. The notion of unity imposed by the rules (such as; the arborescent rules imitating pivotal or dichotomous roots of the nature) appears only when “there is a power takeover in the multiplicity in order to dictate its domination”³⁵. It seems inadequate to associate complex networks of disciplines and their operation at the level of urban terrain with restrictive norms and rules. The assertion of Deleuze and Guattari suggests a free notion of “rhizome” in which “a point can connect to any other point by forming a heterogeneous pattern of growth which is based on establishing a complicated network of multiplicities”.³⁶ As the rhizome carries the capacity of unpredictability, complexity of heterogeneity in its inherent nature, it can be referred as the means for the comprehension of complicated urban networks. In this context,

³⁴ Manuel Castells, “Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age”, in *The Urban Design Reader: Fifth Edition*, New York, Routledge Press, edited by Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout, 2001, p.576.

³⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, op.cit., pp. 9-10.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

in order to effectively comprehend the rhizomatic set of disciplinary relations and becomings, it seems necessary to consider the multiplicity of diverse inputs and forces by eliminating the limitations and restrictions of the disciplines to arrive at the singular, as the one and only inference. Eventually, rhizome by its intrinsic potential of normlessness and infinitude can serve as a model for the complexity of cities in terms of not only concrete spatial organizations but also socio-political and financial constitutions as the authorities to dictate their power and benefits on place.

CHAPTER III

PLACE AS A COMMODITY

3.1. Place as the Locus of Capital Expansion

In the reign of modern capitalism, architecture functions directly with the norms of the current economic system for the organization and production of its financial world. In this system, most of the spatial organizations is determined with respect to impacts of economic rationalization and efficiency. In the world of capitalist system, the term “place” is mostly evaluated as a means for producing income and maximizing profit.³⁷ As David Harvey stated “capitalism is growth oriented, technologically dynamic and crisis prone”.³⁸ In this context, one of the ways capitalism overcomes crises of overaccumulation at certain spots is through geographical expansion. The impulse for geographical expansion to reach new markets renders capitalism dynamic in the sense of sprawl and growth. In the pursuit of income and profit, capital have to penetrate all the geographies it could access for constituting the global economic system it requires. Capitalism organizes fertile geographies of places based on consumption to ease its proliferation and expansion in a global

³⁷ Hakkı Yırtıcı, *Çağdaş Kapitalizmin Mekansal Örgütlenmesi*, İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2005, pp. 10-11.

³⁸ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, op.cit., p. 294.

manner by overcoming the physical limits of the capital. However, this kind of capitalist structuring somehow seems temporal since in case of any crisis such organizations of place will be demolished and replaced by the new profit oriented mechanisms.

One method to reduce the concentration of capital, hence to reduce risks, is to transfer the surplus to different spots for the construction of new places leading to alteration of the existing set of space relations. The other method to solve the overaccumulation of capital is materialized through organizational shifts that can alter both the relations between places and the processes of place construction. In other words, to overcome accumulation of capital in a certain spot, there emerges the necessity for either construction of new places (through export of excess capital) or transformation of place characteristics (through organizational shifts). The tendency of the capital to accelerate its mobility and to increase its revenue leads to different spatial regulations and arrangements by means of perpetual precession and transformation of the existing spatial geographies.³⁹ It seems, in this respect, clearly that profit-oriented mechanisms of the modern capitalism dominates the “processes of place construction”⁴⁰. However, constructing such kind of places which serve for the expansion and growth of Capitalism transforms the notion of “place” into a product of commodity.

In this manner, in the contemporary world, places appear to be invaded by the accumulations of multinational capital. Places which used to serve for local investments are now occupied by the great international corporations of the

³⁹ Yırtıcı, op.cit., p.86.

⁴⁰ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, op.cit., p.294.

capitalist regime due to diminishing transport and communication costs which make the production, merchandizing, marketing and finance capital much more geographically mobile.⁴¹ This allows to capitalist forces the free choice of location to make more profit through the international flow of capital for the geographical expansion. In this case, the term place becomes a tool of capitalist assemblage by providing the enlargement of multinational companies which are the essentials of the capitalist regime. As Mark Gottdiener stated, “the production of space becomes directly part of capital accumulation process that is tied to global linkages in the investment, construction, reconstruction, renovation and redesign of real estate”. Becoming a tool of capitalism, place functions as a platform to spread, encourage and reinforce the propagandas of capitalist regime. As a result, the global circulation of the capital which constitutes the very base of Capitalism begins to be materialized by means of place construction and transformation. This situation brings about the diverse desires of the capitalist regime about places. Consequently, the work of place construction becomes an instrument for the expansion of international capital investments in collaboration with the local capital owners by means of either transforming existing ones or constructing new places on vacant lands.

To understand the issue of place production better, it is important to comprehend the “mode of production by which the product of that society is produced, and the manner in which it is appropriated”⁴². “Every mode of production is structured around a fundamental struggle between two social classes: an exploiting class and an exploited class, of which the former is the

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 297-298.

⁴² Alejandrina Catalano and Doreen Massey, *Capital and Land: Landownership by Capital in Great Britain*, Edward Arnold Publishers, 1978, pp. 23-24.

one who appropriate the surplus”.⁴³ In the capitalist mode of production which is the current one for almost any society, the production of surplus occurs through the manufacture of commodities. In other words, under a capitalist mode of production surplus labor appears in value form as commodities. Evolving under the dominance of such mode of production, place construction has come to a state of producing surplus value to provide rent for the capitalist relations of landownership. Actually, the basic economic power of the spatial production is of course the ability to charge rent, which is the economic category of a relation of the distribution of surplus value.⁴⁴

As it has been argued about the production of space in the society of modern capitalism, the discussions over-emphasize the economic determinants in the generation of new spatial organizations in accordance with the political factors.⁴⁵ That is to say, capital oriented organizations and interventions of the modern economic system designate most of the spatial organizations according to its profit making codes at the expense of manipulating the genes of “place” notion. As Michael Benedikt phrased, “our environment has become ever more commodified, ever more the subject of short term investment, income generation, and resale rather than of lifelong dwelling or long-term city making.”⁴⁶ In the contemporary world of capital system, the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵ John Urry, *Consuming Places*, Routledge Publishers, 1995, p.15.

⁴⁶ Michael Benedikt, “ Less for Less Yet: On Architecture’s Value(s) in the Market Place, in *the Commodification and The Spectacle in Architecture*, University of Minnesota Press, 2005, p.11.

notion of “place” turned into a commodity by the “political economy of contemporary capitalism”⁴⁷ that can be bought, sold and rented to produce surplus value the system demands.

3.2. Place as a Milieu of Consumption

In the consumer society of contemporary capitalism, the question of what people requires to keep living in welfare has become almost meaningless due to gradually increasing consumption patterns imposed by profit oriented capital mechanisms. One of the main reasons for such prodigal consumption habits is that the distinctive border between basic needs and luxury goods have been blurred by the production of pseudo-needs in order to provide differentiation, so to stimulate consumption. This situation leads to “explosive growth of needs”⁴⁸ led by wasteful consumption by leading consumers to read the system of consumption in order to influence what they consume and how much they need to consume. Baudrillard argues that “it is wasteful consumption that allows people and society to feel that they exist, that they are truly alive”.⁴⁹ For the legitimization and optimization of wasteful consumption, the system of capital appeals to the heroes of consumption such as celebrities to “fulfil the function of useless and inordinate expenditure”⁵⁰. Indeed, the critical point to stimulate the desire to consume, is the manufacture of distinctions to be able to

⁴⁷ Mark Gottdiener, *New Forms of Consumption*, Rowman & LittleField Publishers, 2000, p. 266.

⁴⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, London, Sage Publishers, translated by George Ritzer, 1998, first published in French, 1970, p.5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

meet the individuals need for differentiation. Under the dominancy of such a consumption economy, the exchange of commodities is mainly based on having the distinctions of certain products. The dynamism and the vitality of capital circulation seem dependent on the perpetual production of distinctions to achieve certain differentiation. The obligation of capitalist system to permanently keep its dynamism increases the temporariness of products by focusing on the significance of short-termism.

The efficient circulation of the capital occurs through new networks of consumer markets on which the selling of distinctions could be materialized. Through this process of differentiation to accelerate the circulation of capital by maximizing consumption, the distinctions are mainly produced through the contrasts of consumption environments rather than the products themselves. In this context, the system of capitalism manipulates space as an eviscerated, intangible means by eliminating concrete and material conventions binding it to the specific unique place it belongs to. Once space is abstracted in such a way, all kinds of activities and social events can be associated with its flexible state making it indefensible against profit oriented intentions of the capital. In this context John Urry, by interpreting Lefebvre's space discourse, stated that "abstract space is the high point of capitalist relations leading to the quite extraordinary created spaces of the end of the millennium"⁵¹. Under these circumstances, space transforms into a tool of differentiation which serves for the production of distinctions the system of capital demands. In other words, the break-away of space from its unique environment, its place, due to exploitation of capitalist mechanisms renders it as a means for the production of consumption milieus. Most of this production is mainly concerned about

⁵¹ Urry, op.cit., p.25.

producing the spatial differences in order to attract more capital in comparison with the competitor places as other prospects for the accumulation of capital. As David Harvey declared, “the diminution of spatial barriers makes the capital more sensitive to the variations of place and makes places more incentive to be differentiated in ways attractive to the investments of capital”.⁵² The outcome has been the production of both spatial fragmentation and ephemeral distinctions for the actualization of spatial variations.

However, this process of producing spatial differences with the intention of captivating excess capital, seems self-contradictory since it eliminates the authentic values of the geographical diversity originated from the uniqueness of place. To ensure the manufacture of differences as distinctive qualities of commodities, system of capital keeps the control of the spatial organizations as the locales of consumption and capital flux so that it can manage the spaces of consumption by integrating any commercial service to them according to existing circumstances. Within this scope, the achievement of capital system depends on its domination over metropolitan geographies to be able to manipulate spatial conventions according to its own benefits so that space could be redefined in each case to promote consumption of so-called distinctions. This perpetual redefinition makes the abstract spaces of contemporary capital as adaptable to the variable conditions of consumption patterns so that in each case it can re-organize itself to serve for optimization of expenditure. While these abstract spaces have been adapted to the flexible conditions of the capitalist economy, the essential conventions of ‘place’ which render it as the unique ‘place’ of its specific time, geography, society and

⁵² David Harvey, “Time-space compression and the postmodern condition”, in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Blackwell Publishers, 1989, pp. 295-296.

culture confronts with the risk of degradation.⁵³ The more intangible the spaces of capital due to loss of its essence, the more effective for the system of capital to organize the plateaus of consumption phantasy on these abstract geographies of nowhere.

Through the geographies dominated by exploitative demands of modern capital, urban places which have been supposed to host social events and activities perform their service as grounds of consumption for capital flux. The “use-value” of public places have been replaced, and trivialized by their “exchange value” transforming them into a matter of commodity. In the consumer society, the common qualities of the metropolitan public places which have been supposed to host the celebrations, gatherings, ceremonies and protests, function for the adornment of consumption patterns and its environment. In this context, such places mediate to impose the above-mentioned consumption patterns to the popular mass culture. Furthermore, popular mass culture not only promote consumption of perpetually varying commodities, but also highlights the consumption milieu as a distinct commodity for its potential to charge property and rent values. This situation brings about the overvaluation of land in the metropolitan context as a tool for production of surplus value. System of capital organizes profitable and sumptuary investments on these lands as the interlinked agents of its consumption network. To sum up, in the phantasmagoric realm of the capitalist consumption, “society is characterized by the proliferation of consumer places”⁵⁴ marketing all kinds of commodities that actualize the circulation of capital through its abstracted geographies.

⁵³ Yirtici, op.cit., p.76.

⁵⁴ Gottdiener, *New Forms of Consumption*, op.cit., p.24.

3. 3. Consumption of Place

Through the spatial circulation of capital, capitalist system continuously reorganize its environments to predispose consumption according to current requirements of its political economy. Within this vicious cycle of economy, the places of consumption seem as short term investment instruments that have been supposed to carry over the accumulation of capital to the upcoming consumption milieus as new aspirants of capital attraction. In the metropolitan context of consumer society, this ceaseless fluctuation of capital movements to structure the urban atmosphere of consumption, accounts the places of capital as ephemeral environments. Space is made use of as a means of conveyance by the profit-based system of capital to increase its mobility and fluidity, so to enhance its potential to generate more income. At this juncture, system of capital needs to justify the production of new consumption places such that the process of spatial renewals and transformations must seem as if it functions for the improvement of welfare.

To concretize the requirement for production of new consumption environments, the existing networks of capital as stimulating places of expenditure are obliged to be consumed. Consumption of commodity goods for the efficient circulation of capital with the maximum fertility brings about the inevitable consumption of place as the venue of capital investment. In this regard, consumption of place is the basic prerequisite for the construction and production of new places in order to transcend the physical limits of capital. In the metropolitan geography, the destruction of the existing built environment is the fundamental implement for the production. By destruction, it is meant all the consumption process of the place leading to its exhaustion within the political economy of modern capital. As Jean Baudrillard argued “the consumer society sorely requires its objects in order to destroy and consume

them leading to their dwindling disappearance”.⁵⁵ It is in this destruction process that it could ensure the permanent precession of capital as the major necessity of consumer society to sustain its consumption economy. This process of consuming places, however, make the term “place” a commodified object of consumption mentality through which the capital anticipate to charge rent.

Since “activities involving the consumption of space have in common the use of a thoroughly commodified environment”⁵⁶, such places that function for the accumulation of excess capital need to be embellished with retailing activities to render the locations of consumption attractive. In concern with the consumption of place, tourism, one of the most profitable sectors of the capitalist economy, could be mentioned as the obvious instance of spatial consumption. As Gottdiener interpreted, based on the Lefebvrian discourse, “rather than circulation of commodities through geographies, tourism proposes the circulation of people to specific locations that are consumed as spaces”.⁵⁷ In this case, what people actually consume is the unique environment of these specific locations within the scope of capital circulation. Through this kind of consumption which is based on the consumption of spatial characteristics originated from uniqueness of locality, capital circulates and spreads depending on the mobility of consumers. Under these circumstances, place as the locus of everyday life public activities has been adapted to the current market demands of the related geographies. In such geographies of tourism market, the consumption networks of commodities is organized to attract the purchasing

⁵⁵ Baudrillard, op.cit., p.49.

⁵⁶ Gottdiener, op.cit., p.268.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

impulse of the consumers.⁵⁸ The way local distinctions are served to get consumed configures the geographies in question according to the benefits of capital circulation, and renders them as touristic environments. The agents articulating the capital focused places of tourism are mostly based on the intention of making them as desired locations of consumption in order to attract more capital. In such geographies, consumption practices not only have reshaped the very nature everyday life but also have exhausted and transformed public places as the locus of everyday life.⁵⁹

In the world of contemporary capital, in which life is dominated by the code of consumption, rapid transformations of consumption places have brought about a new kind of consumption milieu which is based on the physical absence of actual place called as cyberspace. Such nonexistent spaces are intended to stimulate the consumer desire of people through internet by eliminating the spatial experiences out of the consumption activity. In these virtual environments, commodities are presented with their own material existence as independent of spatial conventions regarding the context of actual locations. On the contrary, “in real venues, not only the presentation of commodity but the environment of the shop itself is geared toward sparking the desire of shoppers to consume.”⁶⁰ With this the marketing of places becomes such a critical parameter for the consumption of commodity goods that consumer pays for not only the products they purchase but also spatial qualities of the shopping environments in which commodities are served through spectacular methods. In other words, consumption of commodity

⁵⁸ Minjoo Oh and Jorge Ardit, “Shopping and Postmodernism: Consumption, Production, Identity and the Internet, in *New Forms of Consumption*, Rowman & LittleField Publishers, 2000, p.79.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.81.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

goods somehow accompanies consumption of spatial qualities leading to inevitable consumption of place in the consumer society.

“For the consumption of space to work as an extension of the accumulation of capital, space not only had to be commodified, but also engineered as a space of consumption with retailing activities.”⁶¹

On the other hand, the play of commodities to seduce the consumption desire functions distinctly in the nonexistent milieus of cyberspaces, compared to the intensively embellished concrete environments of consumption.⁶² While people in concrete places of consumption encounters with the environments of phantasy to stimulate their desire through consumption activity, virtual cyberspace lacks such experiences due to the absence of tangible spatial conventions. Cyberstores serve the non-spatial form of shopping activity which is definitely disembodied from any place as the environment of consumption. This is because neither place nor spectacle exists in the nonphysical realm of E-commerce. Cyberspace is the ultimate phase for consumption of place so that it constitutes its geography of nowhere based on the absence of spatial conventions.

⁶¹ Gottdiener, op.cit., p.270.

⁶² Oh and Arditi, op.cit., p.83.

CHAPTER IV

THE MASS MEDIA CULTURE FOR PROMOTION OF PLACES

4.1. Advertisement of Places for Marketing – Competitive Places

Capitalist financial system evaluates architecture as a stimulant tool for consumption through which the accumulation and circulation of capital could be materialized. Since, in the age of consumption, highly mobile “capital has become much more sensitive to the qualities of places in its search for more profitable accumulation”⁶³, there arises the need of differentiation between places to become more competitive in order to captivate capital investments. Within this competition, the marketing of places becomes more significant ever than before. Advertising and image making seem as the incontestable tools for the effective marketing and selling of places in the competitive processes of the capitalist economy. Furthermore, in some instances, for the abundant marketing of places, their advertisement with the international enterprises gains priority over the architectural qualities. This leads to proliferation of profit oriented projects by contractors aiming to maximize unit price of places by associating them with popular trademarks of the market. In this respect, most of the current architectural production is evaluated on the basis of the organizations associated with it including the architect, the investor, the marketing expert and the advertiser all

⁶³ Harvey, op.cit., p.297.

representing an additional value for the project distinct from its pure architectural value.

In the consumer society, identity value accompanies, even mostly predominates, the use-value of any object that is its intrinsic quality. In this context, there appears additional values arising from the identity value of the designer and the investor in addition to the intrinsic value of the architectural project in the virtue of its architectural qualities as the object of design.⁶⁴ This interaction brings about the reciprocal feedback between the designer or the investor and the design or the project in the sense that they both gain a reciprocal value through each other in the context of consumption culture. Furthermore, the frequency of any project for appearing in the media constitutes an additional media value to it, a value which is distinct from its architectural qualities.⁶⁵ In other words, the more the architectural design is foregrounded by the media, the more reputable and prestigious it is accepted by the popular culture of consumption. In this respect, it seems explicit that built environments as the object architecture are increasingly loaded by identity value and media value through their promotion and presentation within the popular culture of consumption dominated by the mechanisms of capitalism.

Promotion and presentation are here the key figures for the introduction of any project or design to the market of pure competition. In fact, the issue of promotion and presentation brings about a new design sector occupied by the

⁶⁴ C. Abdi Güzer, “Kültürel Çatışma ve Süreklilik Alanı Olarak Mimarlık Eleştirisi” in *Mimarlık 348 - Dosya: Mimarlıkta Eleştiri*, Ankara, Mimarlar Odası Yayın Komitesi, 2009.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

shrewd techniques of mass media and advertising. In case of architecture, advertising requires different qualities in terms of both discourse and implementation since the content of architecture is quite distinct from other consumer products in the market. To say more clearly, architectural advertising demands a new understanding of image and text. The increasing competition of places dictated by the search of capitalist economy for more profitable accumulation leads to a competition between advertisement of projects by means of images and texts. In this case, the competition of places occurs at the level of their fictitious images and visuals rather than their pure architectural and spatial qualities. In this competition process, images must be impressive since they constitute the face of the project through which it is introduced and promoted to sell. The process of producing images represents the commercialization side of the contemporary architecture in the competitive market of capital. In this respect, architects and investors put in effort for producing such visual materials for the advertisement and marketing of places and highlighting their extraordinary qualities in a spectacular way through use of images. As Harvey eloquently asserts:

“Capitalist penetration of the realm of cultural production becomes particularly attractive, because the lifetime consumption of images, as opposed to more tangible objects autos and refrigerators, is almost instantaneous.”⁶⁶

Under the dominancy of dynamic flux of capital, capitalist system always seeks for alternative places by exhausting the already produced ones in a short period as an inevitable result of its consumerist and competitive qualities. While producing the new ones, the system always makes the justification of them by emphasizing how they will be more contemporary by associating them with luxury, prosperity and even with nobility in order to

⁶⁶ Harvey, *Justice Nature and The Geography of Difference*, op.cit., p. 246.

awake a stimulation of desire towards these places. In the market of inter-place competition, the socio-economical processes of place construction and reconstruction are highly dependent on representation through all manners of advertisement. Within this competition, people would like to invest in places according to their market value comprising exchange value and identity value more than their use value and function. Market value is what determines the permanence of place in the clash of capital competition. Actually, there is no permanence of place in the system of contemporary capitalism within which places are exhausted and replaced at short notice by more profitable investments as center of attractions. Instead there is the period of validity for places during which they could reign as long as they fulfill the profit oriented expectations of capitalist consumption culture.

“Those who have invested in the physical qualities of place have to ensure that activities arise which render their investments profitable by ensuring the permanence of place. Coalitions of entrepreneurs actively try to shape activities in places for this purpose.”⁶⁷

In this process, advertising is the main means for shaping what people want. As Kenneth Frampton quotes from Thomas Frank, “advertising is a means of contributing meaning and values that are necessary and useful to people in structuring their lives, their casual relationships and their rituals”.⁶⁸ By means of advertisement, current taste of the society could be influenced and channeled into certain places. In this respect, the consumption urge of the society is stimulated. Eventually, “the entire city center becomes a multi-themed consumption space designed for the purposes of capital circulation

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.296.

⁶⁸ Kenneth Frampton, “The Work of Architecture in the Age of Commodification” in *Commodification and Spectacle in Architecture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2005, p. xiii.

but stimulating through the use of advertising and marketing images such like brand logos, signs and trademarks”.⁶⁹

4.2. Architecture of “Perception Design”: Image Production, Branding

Having been shaped under the current circumstances of global capital system, architecture has become a brand in itself for the sake of overvaluing the places that it produces as commodities. It is a brand that serves for advertising and marketing of places by aiming to satisfy consumers’ luxury desire. As Kenneth Frampton stated “today’s brand designers are dedicated to not only gratification of consumer taste but also to the stimulation of desire knowing full well that everything depends on the sublimating eroticism of consumption as opposed to intrinsic quality of the thing consumed”.⁷⁰

That is to say, architecture, so the place production, has been adapted to the requirements of brand notion to impress consumer taste by stimulating their desire of having specific places (places which are served as either commodities by their own material existence or environments for the consumption of other commodities. For this purpose, most of the current architectural production is mainly based on stimulating the consumerist desire of people leading to unavoidable integration of advertisement business into architectural production due to increasing competition between places of capital. Kevin Ervin Kelly redefines the service of architecture as “Perception Design”⁷¹ helping consumers to buy through environmental signaling that

⁶⁹ Gottdiener, op.cit., p.281.

⁷⁰ Frampton, op.cit., p. xii.

⁷¹ Kelley, op.cit., pp. 53-54.

influences their perceptions which means, in a sense, the design of consumers themselves. Although the main parameters impressing consumers are the quality, the ambience and the service of products, the actual issue is the perception of these parameters.⁷² Herein, the key point is the figuring out of the consumer profile and shaping perceptions to match their desires. Images are strategically strong weapons on perceptions. That's why image making is a significant instrument for the advertisement business. In the capitalist economic system, consumer taste is mostly determined by the supervision of media and advertising tools. The arts of visual communication have been co-opted by the admiss drives of the advertising industry. Under the sway of growing advertising industry which is supported by global capital investments, architecture, in a manner, has evolved into “design of perceptions through image making”⁷³. As a result, architecture tenders integrated design services providing not only design expertise but also branding and advertising as marketing strategies. Most of the architectural firms serve to understand the clients within the context of their industries, corporate cultures and consumers' minds, to create branding environments.



Fig. 4.1 Shook Kelley – Buehler's Fresh Foods, 2008

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p.52.

For instance, Shook Kelley, who defines themselves as a typical design firm with a focus on leveraging consumer perceptions, starts working by figuring out consumer profile by means of field observations to acquire data about their lifestyle; the kind of car they drive, the way they wear, their hair, the kind of shoes they wear⁷⁴. In Kevin Ervin Kelley's terms, "it is a firm, which designs to sell things, producing not only what people need but also what people want to give them moments of pleasure". People enjoy the experience of buying sometimes more than having the products themselves, because the moment of buying is one of the enthusiastic fantasy and escape.



Fig. 4.2 Shook Kelley – The Scenic River Coffee Co, 2008

⁷⁴ Ibid.



Fig. 4.3 Shook Kelley – Proprietary Concepts, 2008

As mentioned before, for the absorption of excess capital as the basic obligation of capitalist economic system, it is critical to stimulate consumption activity through production of differences as distinctions of commodities. Although these distinctions are designed and created through the material qualities of objects to some extent, their display for the captivation of consumption desire is mostly materialized by the collage of ostentatious images rather than mere existence of products since differentiation of commodities has already reached market saturation by the excessive production demands of the capitalist economy. Indeed, most of these distinctions to differentiate the commodities in the eyes of consumers are intended through the proliferation of images since it seems much more easier and effective to diversify them than the commodities themselves. Such circumstances make the capitalist investors think about identifying their commodities with influential visuals in order to increase their market value through loading them by abundance of fanciful images. In this case, in order to maximize their profit most enterprisers of consumer goods have to invest “great amount of resources in the development of an image that hopefully will make the product distinguishable from competitor products in the

market.”⁷⁵ In this sense, the narratives and images of mass media system replace the real life experiences.

In case of spatial experiences, such textual expressions of the media visuals surpass the social conventions of place by distorting its authentic attributes for the sake of procuring the highest market value. That is to say, the hyperreal terrain of contemporary mass media mostly eliminates spatial experiences. Due to the concerns to enhance the market value of places as profit oriented commodities produced and consumed in the consumption cycle of capitalist economy, most of the contemporary metropolitan environments have become increasingly image loaded.⁷⁶ Such places produced and promoted by the current marketing techniques of media system could not be associated with the norms of the real world. Rather, they constitute their own geography of hyperreality which seems more dominant than the reality to lead and to control the trajectory of everyday life by capturing its spaces to host social activities as the means of all sorts of interaction.

Capturing the spaces of everyday life means capturing the perpetual flux of urban metropolitan life. As Andre Jansson asserts in his article, eventually, due to the increasing sovereignty of mass media over consumer society, people are mostly encountered with the semiotic representations of the places as both the locale and the object of the consumption activity rather than the

⁷⁵ Andre Jansson, “The Cultural Ambivalence of Reflexive Modernity”, in *Image Culture*, Grafikerna Livrena i Kungälv Press, Sweden, 2001, p. 33.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

material attributes of places.⁷⁷ In this abstracted realm of everyday life which is mostly distorted by the mass media embellishments, media texts load the society with ornate images of places to impose them as expressions of lifestyle, welfare and luxury. Consequently, the urban places which used serve for most of the everyday life social activities have become commercial apparatuses for the presentation of mass media images and texts.

4.3. Places of Symbols and Signs for Social Status, Life Style and Identity

In the financial system of contemporary capitalism, architectural design functions as one of the most important driving forces for the stimulation of consumption desire. In this context, as it is mentioned throughout previous chapter, place has an impressive power on the orientation of consumption patterns. As being the locus of everyday life activities including almost all kinds of shopping and consumption, place majorly determines consumption patterns of the society on the basis of the parameters where to consume, when to consume and even what to consume. However, this domination of place over consumption patterns is not due to mere physical qualities or spatial conventions of place. Rather, there is a system that dominates and designates the overall image of places in the eyes of consumers, which is the system of symbols and signs. Signs and symbols are strategic tools to shape the taste and the perception of consumer society. According to the arguments of Gottdiener, “in the image based on postmodern culture, material goods are not connected to the demands of daily life, but to the system of symbols and signs as indicators of social status and representational position”.⁷⁸ In other words, sign

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁷⁸ Gottdiener, op.cit., p. 19.

value is what determines the popular taste of the consumers in the critical decision of what is needed. As Gottdiener quotes from Baudrillard, “the exchange of the commodities in today’s society is based on signs and symbols”.⁷⁹

Dominating the conditions of capital market, signs and symbols have a critical role in the consumption economy of contemporary capitalism. In this respect, many of the investors are shifting their focus from the marketing of products themselves to marketing of lifestyles which is attributed to those products by means of symbols and signs through images and visuals. This is because having signs of commodities is thought as the prestigious and the exclusive means for constituting a certain lifestyle. With respect to discussions of Gottdiener, “consumption today is based appropriating signs of the commodities for lifestyle construction making the “sign value” a critical point in the competition world of mass marketing”.⁸⁰ In the consumer society, appropriating signs and symbols associated with the brands and their products is perceived as the prerequisites for the constitution of identity by means of symbolic values attributed to them through ceaseless production of advertisement images.

“Consumption culture work as lifestyle orientations that combine various consumer choices into a complex of daily living. Consumption practices have become the domain within which people explore and define their own identities. The pursuit of distinctive lifestyles through consumption represents a means of developing identity and status”.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

In case of identity and lifestyle constitution, mass media images doubly operate in terms of penetrating the perceptions of consumer society to desire. The first is mainly due to the mere sign value of a logo as the symbol of a brand including its brand value as the face of a commodity in the competitive market. The latter is produced through exclusive frames of everyday life in which everyday life is rendered through exaggerated images indicating the traces of wealth and luxury in a fancy manner. In this respect, architecture constitutes a fertile and productive plateau for the production and legitimization of above mentioned images. This is because any slice of life mentioned in the advertisement image is impressive and influential as much as it refers to the territory of everyday life in terms both its physical qualities as its locus and its social patterns as its culture. In this context, while producing marketing images, advertisement refers to venues of daily life as the essential matter of architecture. Whenever a commodity is advertised through an image, it is definitely depicted within an ostentatious environment as its location.

“Mass advertising fuels the spending activities of society through production of desire. The key economic relation of consumer society is the link between promotion of desire in the mass media and advertising and the commercial venues where goods and services can be purchased.”⁸²

In this respect, the physical environment of advertisement object is decorated by the collage of different products and symbols to define an aura for the object in question. In other words, the commodity is introduced and advertised to society in a spectacular manner constituting a totalitarian collage giving way to the creation of lifestyles. The advertisement issue also

⁸² Ibid., p. 281.

functions similarly for the promotion of architectural environments. In this case, architecture does not constitute the physical environment of the commodity advertised in the image but it is the commodity itself which is promoted through the image. For the promotion of architectural projects, the desire is induced through the integration of symbols and signs into them. This is because in the consumption culture of capitalism, signs and symbols function as the expressions of identity and social status.

“In the cities of 21th century, spatial meaning is produced by thematic architectural projects most of which are predominated by symbols and texts of functional communication techniques of advertisement.”⁸³

Covering the argument of Castells on the issue, the meaning is determined by the realm of symbols and signs for the spaces of capital rather than the physical qualities or architectural characteristics. This is what makes the spaces of capital as intangible entities deterritorialized from the conventions of architecture as the constituents of its context. Once those spaces are deterritorialized, they function as eviscerated locations whose content and essence is dominated by the invasion of signs and symbols.

Eventually, the system of signs and symbols occupies places of contemporary capitalism by replacing their spatial conventions with the play of images. In the age of contemporary capitalism, places are repository of symbols and signs dominating the culture of mass communication and social interaction through the distortion of spatial meaning. In this context, it could be asserted that place is the locus of symbolic communication through which the codes of consumption are imposed by means of signs for the promotion of desire and manipulation of taste.

⁸³ Castells, op.cit., p. 581.

CHAPTER 5

PSEUDO PLACE

5.1. Themes and Simulations – Architecture of Spectacles

During the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of projects destined to high income groups as significant tools of the current mode of spatial production. There is the perpetually increasing competition among them due to capital concerns in the market of overproduction. In this respect, the competitive pressure dominates most of the current architectural production through profit minded strategies.

“The image building of community becomes embedded in powerful processes of inter urban competition. Concern for both real and fictional qualities of place increases in a phase of capitalist development in which the power to command space, particularly with respect to financial and money flows, has become more marked than ever before.”⁸⁴

In this case, it comes up the obligation of differentiating architectural projects from one another based on the production of distinctions to captivate more capital. Within this scope, many of the current projects are referred to certain themes for the production of distinctions. That is to say, through the competition process, themed environments are preferred for the production of

⁸⁴ Harvey, Justice Nature and The Geography of Difference, op.cit., p. 247.

difference. “Difference is produced not through products but contrasts in the themed environment alone”.⁸⁵ Production of distinctions is prerequisite for almost all kinds of architectural projects designed in the urban context since the cities of contemporary capitalism have been shaped according to capital accumulation processes. In the cities of capitalism, even for housing projects which are supposed to serve the basic need of shelter, there the exchange value prevails compared the to use value.⁸⁶

Projects which are designed with the concern of charging an exchange value mostly becomes prominent by their quantitative conventions such as the magnitude and the development of the investment.⁸⁷ This situation also brings about the manipulation of place conventions in the cities of contemporary capitalism. This manipulation involves substitution of spatial conventions such that reality replaced by simulation, experience and memory replaced by text, context replaced by location and quality replaced by quantity. In this respect, most of the current spatial organizations are materialized through the concern of achieving those new parameters as the determinant qualities for places of capital. Such places which are deprived of the essential architectural conventions in their context could be mentioned as the outputs of deterritorialization. In other words, those places are the simulations deterritorialized from the realities of the world.

Simulations as the increasing characteristic of places in the contemporary world lead to disappearance of the reality. Rather, simulations present a

⁸⁵ Gottdiener, op.cit., p. 273.

⁸⁶ Şengül, op.cit., p.55.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

fictitious reality in their own terrain which is more dominant than the reality to replace it. During this process, simulations are designed and created by use of the media tools for the communication between the place which is simulated and the user who is expected to be captivated by it. In this case, one of the tasks of the architect becomes designing the simulations. Indeed, once a place is simulated through invasion of manipulated media instruments, it becomes an abstract commercial venue. Furthermore, the media tools used for simulation of spatial environments work as extensions of capitalist assemblages to increase their profitability in the market of competition. “Consequently, it no longer exists any media in the original sense of the word, but merely commercial apparatuses producing simulacra for an imaginary mass audience”.⁸⁸ In other words, the media has become a profit-oriented apparatus of marketing. In such simulated and abstracted places, users are not interested in spatial qualities, since the simulations made by manipulative representations of media tools seem much more ostentatious.

The creation of themes as integrated with architectural projects intends to produce center of attractions for the stimulation and orientation of the desire for consumption depending on an impression of consumer taste. As Harvey stated, “inter-place competition is not simply about attracting production but also about attracting consumers through the creation of amenities such as a cultural center, a pleasing urban or regional landscape and the like”.⁸⁹ In this context, the production of such themes involve all the processes of advertisement and marketing as the means for communication such as images, texts, symbols and signs as they were covered throughout previous chapters.

⁸⁸ Jansson, op.cit., p. 44.

⁸⁹ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference*, op. cit., p.298.

“As a vain yet also effective trace, the sign has the power of destruction because it has the power of abstraction – and thus also the power to construct a new world different from nature’s initial one. Herein lies the secret of Logos as foundation of all power and all authority”.⁹⁰

As it is mentioned clearly in Lefebvre’s argument, signs play a critical role in the construction of themes due to their intrinsic power of abstraction. Since the system of signs operates through intangible codes of communication by means of symbols, texts and images, it has the certain potential for the legitimization of themed environments. In the social processes of place construction, signs take a critical role for dominating other projects as the competitive environments. Indeed, most of these projects are introduced with a certain motto to render them as exclusive investments by use of media texts and symbolic images.

“Themed environments work not only because they are connected to the universe of commodities and are spaces of consumption but also they offer consumers a spatial experience that is an attraction by itself to promote the consumption of space”.⁹¹

For the spaces of capital, themes cooperate with the system of signs and symbols for the creation of amenities in a spectacular manner. In this manner, place is experienced as a spectacle whose language is determined by the signs of contemporary capitalism. Spectacle consists of signs and images as its language for the perception of place through conventions of spectacle.

“Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the result and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not a mere

⁹⁰ Lefebvre, op.cit., p.135.

⁹¹ Gottdiener, op.cit., p. 284.

decoration added to the real world. It is the very heart of this real society's unreality. In all its particular manifestations — news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment — the spectacle represents the dominant model of life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choices that have already been made in the sphere of production and in the consumption implied by that production. In both form and content the spectacle serves as a total justification of the conditions and goals of the existing system.”⁹²

In this context, spectacle generates its own communication code that operates at the level of symbols, signs and images. Spectacle serves for implementation of profit oriented intentions imposed by capital accumulation processes through creation of intangible venues dominated by the system of signs. Once a place becomes an unreal venue through creation of spectacle, the organization of place depends on the demands of capitalist assemblages by means of signs and images as the language of spectacle. “The language of the spectacle consists of signs of the dominant system of production — signs which are at the same time the ultimate end-products of that system.”⁹³ Eventually, in the context of contemporary capitalism, themes and simulations operate through the system of signs and symbols for the abstraction of places through creation of spectacle.

5.2. Themed Environments – Placelessness, Non-Place

Throughout this study, both the competition between places of capital and its impacts on the current design and production processes of spatial organizations are discussed. It has also been referred to quickly increasing

⁹² Guy Debord, *The Society of The Spectacle*, New York, Zone Books, translated by Donald Nicholson Smith, 1994, first published in French, 1967, p. 6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

quantity of themed projects as the competitive tools of the capital market. In this regard, it is going to be analyzed how and by which means themed projects are composed. Furthermore, it will be focused on how themed projects distort the intrinsic conventions of “place” as the constituents of its essence with reference to discourse of Aldo Rossi, Edward Relph and Mark Augé. Through the production of themed environments, themes are created in a spectacular manner with reference to signs and images. Within this process, themes are selected to refer certain characteristics of the existing or historical places as another means for the competition. In this context, rapid proliferation of themed projects most of which are based on imitative replicas or/and historical references brings about a new type of place that I will call pseudo place. Sticking the characters of an existing place directly on a new one could not provide us its atmosphere since it lacks space and time experiences. As Aldo Rossi states, “the place in itself is a repository of history determined by its space and time, by its topographical dimensions and its form, by its ancient and recent events and by its memory”.⁹⁴ Actually, the proposal of Aldo Rossi emphasizes that construction of places is exactly based on a cumulative formation, such that place emerges over time as the accumulation of its diverse constituents. However, as opposed to notions of Rossi, the way today’s architecture designs and produces places neglects the significance of place’s spirit which is shaped through cumulative experiences of the lived world leading to the loss of *genius loci*.

Such way of producing place based on abstract themes confronts with the nature of the term “place” itself. As Edward Relph states, “places are not abstractions or concepts but are directly experienced phenomena of the lived

⁹⁴ Aldo Rossi, “The Locus” in *The Architecture of The City*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1984, p. 107.

world and hence are full with meanings, with real objects and with ongoing activities”.⁹⁵ However, the places of contemporary capitalism are mostly designed and constructed through themes and simulations by the domination of signs and images rendering them as spectacles alienated from experienced phenomena of the lived world. In this case, the spatial distinctions which arise from the variety of meanings, experiences and socio-cultural roots as the cumulative constituents of the context face the risk to disappear. Once spatial distinctions disappear due to the lack of context, there is the sovereignty of uniformity that brings about the production of monotonous environments.

This situation leads to “placelessness” that means the environment without significant places based on the extinction of spatial distinctions. Through contemporary environments dominated by “placelessness”, there exists neither spatial diversity nor experiential order, rather there exists spatial uniformity and the conceptual order. “The overall result is the undermining of the place for both individuals and cultures, and the casual replacement of the diverse and significant places of the world with anonymous spaces and exchangeable environments”.⁹⁶ The lack of meaning and experience as the time deepened social phenomena of the lived world leads to the emergence of “non-place”.

“If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The

⁹⁵ Edward Relph, “Prospects for Places: from Place and Placelessness” in *The Urban Design Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, edited by Michael Larice and Elizabeth MacDonald, 2003, p. 120.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position.”⁹⁷

In the realm of non-places, there exists neither spatial distinctions defined by certain characteristics of place nor time deepened memories and experiences as cumulative constituents of the context. In this context, non-place seems as quite the opposite of the term “place” by definition. Non-places have neither authentic characteristics as their distinctive identity nor traces of local references and memory arising from their specific context. In other words, the environment of non-place constitutes neither singular identity nor relations, rather it brings about mere solitude and similitude.⁹⁸ Malls does not carry the qualities of an authentic place such as characteristics of locality, traces of context or meaningful roots of collective memory. In case of such environments, there is no spatial experience for the users as it exists for an authentic place, rather they serve users the experience of a spectacle through domination of images, signs and texts.

“Anthropological place is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drive. A person entering to non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or drive.”⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Augé, op.cit., pp. 77-78.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 101-103.

In the uniformly designed environments of non-place, which are deprived of the authentic spatial distinctions, users could experience the environment of non-place passively through extrinsic perception of the spectacle. In other words, since non-places are designed to be passed through, users of such environments have no more than the passive position of a spectator in the realm of the spectacle just to spectate it.

Eventually, in the system of contemporary capitalism, there exists the dominancy of spatial production of spectacles based on the production of non-places and environments of “placelessness”. Those places have been introduced to consumers as venues of luxury by means of referring unreal images and concepts of spectacle. In this case, the system of signs and images replaces the real conventions of place by reducing it into a matter of intangible commodity. As Debord stated, “when the real world is transformed into mere images, mere images become real beings”¹⁰⁰. According to his argument, the spectacle penetrates almost all parts of everyday life including spatial environments as its locus.

“When images become more important than their referents, when the copy foregoes the original, the simulacrum rules the world. The society of the spectacle is thus a society in which people get alienated from their own existence, as well as from reality itself.”¹⁰¹

In this manner, spectacle generates its own reality based on hyperreality. As Debord Stated, “the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a

¹⁰⁰ Debord, op.cit., p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Jansson, op.cit., pp. 42-43.

social relation between people that is mediated by images.”¹⁰² The places produced through creation of spectacle could be identified as disconnected from the realities of world, rather they constitute their own autonomous reality within the abstract and detached realm of the spectacle.

5.3. Viaport Venezia - Pseudo Place

Viaport Venezia, located in Gaziosmanpaşa district of İstanbul, is a themed environment imitating to the context of Venice with reference to both its architectural qualities and its city image. It legitimizes its own existence by means of referring the components of Venice city image through excessive production of visuals and texts for promotion, yet there is neither such an environment physically the context like Venice.



Fig. 5.1 Viaport Venezia, 2013

¹⁰² Debord, op.cit., p. 6.

In this context, Viaport Venezia as a themed environment is based on the production of images and texts to associate the project with the characteristics of the existing place Venice. Viaport Venezia is rendered as the spectacle through the fictitious system of images and texts.

“Viaport Venezia has more -not less- to offer than Venice. For instance Venice has gondolas and canals. So does our Venice. You no longer have to Travel to Venice to experience the Venice. The delight of Venice with historical texture, peerless water canals and architectural aesthetic is now in the European side of İstanbul”.¹⁰³

As it has been mentioned throughout this study, the major cause of theme based environments is to create hegemony in the market of competition. Since there is the increasing competitive market of built environments in İstanbul, themes become widespread to captivate more capital. In this case, Viaport Venezia is one of the biggest capital investments based on the production of a themed environment through the intangible system of images and texts. Dominated by the fictitious language of media implements, Viaport Venezia is constituted as a total simulation. Through assemblage of visuals and texts, Viaport Venezia is introduced and advertised to shape the taste and the perception of consumer society. In this context, it is referred to use of media implements to imitate the certain characteristics of Venice.

¹⁰³ Viaport Venezia. (n.d.). Retrieved August 27, 2014.



Fig. 5.2 Viaport Venezia, 2013

“Viaport Venezia brings the highest quality of brands in the world together. The latest creations, trends followed by the world. Everything can be found at Viaport Venezia as Venice can now be found in İstanbul.”¹⁰⁴

Viaport Venezia is not related with the the experienced phenomena of the lived world. Rather it represents itself through the intangible assemblage of visuals, signs and symbols as the spectacle. Viaport Venezia is detached from the context of İstanbul. Rather, it prefers to constitute its own hyperreal geography dominated by conventions of the spectacle.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.



Fig. 5.3 Viaport Venezia, 2013

Viaport Venezia is completely designed, equipped and produced as a consumption milieu including all matters of consumption, consumption of commodity goods, consumption of signs and symbols, consumption of images and texts, consumption of place and even consumption of culture and context. Since its existence and lifetime is based on the achievement of consumption, theme is the most vital constituent for the case of Viaport Venezia. “Themed places which are designed principally for consumption epitomize pleasure zone architecture”.¹⁰⁵ In this context, the case of Viaport Venezia epitomize the use of architectural characteristics and city image of the existing place Venice to stimulate the desire of consumption with reference to intentions of capital mechanisms.

“Themed consumer environments attract people to their location in competition with other locations by providing a certain

¹⁰⁵ Gottdiener, op.cit., p. 278.

experience that derives from image-driven popular culture. The environment of such places is extension of mass advertising and mass media that seeks to capture an urban ambience as their milieu”.¹⁰⁶



Fig. 5.4 Viaport Venezia, 2013

With reference to arguments of Castells, for themed places detached from the context of their environment like Viaport Venezia, the meaning is determined by the assemblage of symbols and signs rather than experienced phenomena of the lived world.¹⁰⁷ Viaport Venezia does not have a real sense of place since it lacks cumulative space and time experiences as the constituents for the spirit of place, rather it produces a neutral environment by the dominance of abstract media implements to serve for the profit oriented intentions of capitalism in the pursuit of more profitable accumulation of capital. The more the place is detached from its physical and social environment, its

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁰⁷ Castells, op.cit., p. 581.

context, the more fertile it becomes for the mechanisms of capital. In this case, place conventions and qualities arising from its context are replaced by the intangible system of images, texts and signs according to capital market.



Fig. 5.5 Viaport Venezia, 2013

For pseudo places like Viaport Venezia there is neither significance of spatial distinctions nor traces of local characteristics. Pseudo places can be constructed and reconstructed at any time on anywhere. This is why the system of capital can easily materialize its spatial organization by means of pseudo places through boundless geographies without any obstructs of context or location. For instance, by the dominance of capitalist mechanisms a simulation of Venice could be constructed again and again at different locations with reference to abstract system of images and texts as it already has been in case of Viaport Venezia. However, as a pseudo place Viaport Venezia neither has spatial and contextual distinctions arising from its unique environment nor social meaning due to time deepened experiences, memory.



Fig. 5.6 Viaport Venezia, 2013

Eventually, such production of space based on imitation, cannot provide a meaning sense of place since it lack all the inherent constituents of the term “place” , rather it constitutes mere pseudo place which is invaded by the language of images and texts as a simulation. In this respect, it does not seem possible to decompose any place into its constituents in order to take some of them for the design and production of a new place. Actually, “a place is a qualitative total phenomenon, which we could not reduce to any of its properties without losing its concrete nature of sight”.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Norberg-Schulz, op.cit., p. 8.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study it has been covered the interaction between the system of contemporary capitalism and spatial organization of cities as the fertile geographies of capital accumulation. It has been discussed how the power and profit oriented mechanisms of capitalist financial system dominates the built environments. In this context, this thesis has also introduced the methods of current spatial production with reference to place theories and discussions in diverse fields.

In the realm of capitalism, architecture operates with the codes of the competitive capital market for the design and production of its spatial organization. In this manner, built environments are mostly designed and organized according to financial efficiency. This is mainly due to the system of capital manipulates the built environments for the implementation of its abstract geographies to enhance its profitability. To increase its domination over such geographies, capitalism demands the production of neutral locations as decontextualized from the characteristics of their environment. The more the space is abstracted and detached from the context of its environment, the more effective and influential the financial system of capitalism to direct and manipulate it for its own intentions. However, such production of space through the concerns of capital market makes the term place into a matter of commodity which serves for the accumulation of capital. This situation also brings about a new understanding of place for the system of capital, that

describes place as the ‘locus of consumption’ to promote the consumption activity. Within this conception, places are designed and constructed as both objects and milieus of consumption through the stimulation of consumer desire. Such a mode of spatial production based on the promotion of consumption activity leads to the conversion of places into distinct commodities by themselves. Within these circumstances, a significant part of spatial production is materialized depending on the consumption of place making contemporary places of capital objects of short-term investment which are produced and constructed to be replaced and demolished by more profitable investments. Eventually, capital mechanisms dominate over space through the intangible system of images and texts. Once a place is decontextualized and produced as deprived of its spatial and social conventions as the constituents of its essence, it becomes vulnerable for the invasion of extrinsic determinants. As a result, the production of space is supervised by extrinsic installations rather than the intrinsic qualities of place as its essence; *genius loci*.

Initially, there exists the invasion of place by the system of images and texts. In this context, mechanisms of the capitalist financial system make use of mass media tools to direct spatial organizations. The integration of media implements with spatial production processes highlights the issue of advertisement in case of places. The images and texts of mass media serve the promotion of places. In this case, the design and production of such media implements are somehow included changing the scope of the architectural design services. In this manner, the mass media and advertisement transform the major purpose of architectural practice into “perception design”¹⁰⁹. That is to say, under competitive circumstances of the capitalist market, architectural

¹⁰⁹ Kelley, op.cit., p. 53.

design services are focused on stimulating the consumption desire through designation of perceptions. Through this process, architecture cooperates with the tools of mass media and advertisement leading to the emergence of “integrated design services”¹¹⁰. With the involvement of integrated design services, however, the assemblage of media images and texts replaces some of the architectural conventions which used to function as the essential determinants for the qualification of any architectural object. Such integrated design services also concentrate on the design of lifestyles and identity as integrated with architectural design. In this context, the way designers introduce and promote any built environment is implemented through the creation of lifestyles and identities. However, such way of sticking the lifestyle or identity to any built environment contradicts with the inherent nature of the term place. Since the sense of place emerges through time deepened social and spatial experiences, the meaning and context of any place is actually determined by its diverse constituents. That is why to promote places by means of images and texts which promise the possession of identity and lifestyle cannot provide a meaningful sense of place, rather it constitutes a sense of pseudo place.

In this case, architecture refers to themes and simulations to produce the distinctions demanded by the competitive market. The more the built environments provide distinctions through the use of such themes and simulations, the more competent they become to captivate the capital investments. This is why themed projects prevail in the current competitive market. In this context, architecture intensively refers to the use of signs and symbols for the legitimization of themes. However, since signs and symbols

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

operate through their intangible autonomous system, they have the power to replace the architectural conventions of authentic place by profit oriented conventions of capitalist abstract place. In this manner, the invasion of signs and symbols decontextualizes places from their environment. Once place is decontextualized from the realities of the lived world, it becomes a simulation, an intangible venue for the accumulation of capital. The domination of themes and simulations over built environments operates through system of signs and symbols for the creation of distinctions in a spectacular manner. In this manner, place becomes the spectacle determined by the assemblages of signs, symbols and images. For the environments based on the spectacle there is no spatial or social experience of place as it exists for an authentic place, rather such intangible venues are experienced through the demonstration of signs and symbols. In case the places are based on the spectacle, there is the passive presence of the users as mere spectators without social and spatial experience. In other words, users are the temporary guests for such spectacular environments. They are supposed to perceive the spectacle through its system of signs and images with reference to intentions of the spectacle. Once they are saturated with the content of the spectacle, they become outsiders again. That is to say, there is neither a contextual connection due to the existence of social roots nor traces of true life experiences arising from collective memory in such spectacular environments as the invaders of current spatial production.

Deprived of the authentic conventions of the term place, environments of spectacle lead to the emergence of “non-place” which is the opposite of the place by definition. Since non-place is based on the lack of meaning and experience as social phenomena of the lived world, environments of non-place are deterritorialized from their surroundings. In this case, there is the domination of stereo-typed environments without spatial distinctions, namely environments of “placelessness” as Relph raised it.

All in all, the capitalist method of spatial production, which is based on the production of distinctions for the more effective and profitable expansion and accumulation of capital, ultimately leads to the destruction and disappearance of spatial distinctions through environments of “placelessness” and “non-place”. The ultimate result is the environments of nowhere, where the uniformity and similitude reigns. This is the utmost absence of total environmental image which is based on the existence of distinctions and relations through identity and meaning, the total human perception for the sense of place and location as Kevin Lynch has defined.

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