Architectural Reading of the Film "Terminal" via Non-Place

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the concept of non-place/non-lieu was opened up for discussion via the film Terminal (Steven Spielberg, 2003, ABD) on the basis of the phenomenon of "place" in architecture. The strong relation between the cinema and architectural space has been investigated in the relevant literature many times from different perspectives. The film Terminal offers an environment to architects to discuss the phenomenon of non-lieu. While both the cinema and architecture reinforce people's existence through their own methods, they offer experiences about space by mobilizing all emotions during a visual perception. Non-lieus are places are the structures, buildings or spaces that memories cannot be accumulated. There are two fundamental qualities belonging to a non-place. The first is that being in those spaces almost always occurs as part of a specific goal. The second is that the use of those spaces requires guidebooks specific to them. "Non-lieu" is a word that is used to refer to places that do not possess a sense of "place". In his article entitled "Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity" (Augé, 1995) and in his book bearing the same title, mentions the terms of "nonlieu"- "non-place". When analyzing spatial typologies specific to supermodernity, Augé argues that spaces such as airports, highways, supermarkets, shopping malls and hotel rooms involve or describe "non-lieu". The Terminal movie is bringing a new approach to the concept of nonlieu in architectural approach.

Keywords: Architecture, Cinema, Nonlienu, Non-place, Steven Spielberg, Terminal Movie,

INTRODUCTION

This study is interested in the phenomenon of place, non-place through the movie Terminal directed by Steven Spielberg in 2003 (Official web site of the movie). The major topic of architecture is space and place. 'Non-lieu' is a word used to refer to places that do not possess a sense of "place". French anthropologist, Marc Augé, mentions the terms of "nonlieu"- "non-place" in his book (Augé, 1995). The concept of 'non-lieu' requires

wide approach and deep discussion in architectural perspective, so the movie of "Terminal" provides effective medium. Non-lieus are places are the structures, buildings or spaces that memories cannot be accumulated. There are two fundamental qualities belonging to a non-place. The first is that being in those spaces almost always occurs as part of a specific goal. The second is that the use of those spaces requires guidebooks specific to them. "Non-lieu" is a word that is used to refer to places that do not possess a sense of "place". In his article entitled "Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity" (Augé, 1995) and in his book bearing the same title, the French Anthropologist Marc Augé mentions the terms of "nonlieu"- "non-place", which are defined as being without a place, non-place or non-space. When analysing spatial typologies specific to supermodernity, Augé (1995) argues that spaces such as airports, highways, supermarkets, shopping malls and hotel rooms involve or describe "non-lieu". Non-lieus are places such as expressways, cash points and airports or large shopping malls that have been built to allow speedy circulation of human beings and commodities.

It is possible to explain a concept with explain the opposite of that like place and non-place. Thus, it may be a good idea to learn about place in architectural, planning and design literature. Genius Loci written by Norberg-Schulz (1980) is important reference to understand non-lieu in this approach. The strong relation between the cinema and architectural space has been investigated in the relevant literature many times from different perspectives. A film is a telegraphic, narrative device, capable of engaging critical architectural discourse (Verderber, 2014). The film Terminal offers an environment to architects to discuss the phenomenon of non-lieu. While both the cinema and architecture reinforce people's existence through their own methods, they offer experiences about space by mobilizing all emotions during a visual perception.

METHOD

In this study a collective knowledge from anthropology, planning, architecture and cinema has been gathered and to construct a new understanding about the Non-Lieu in Terminal buildings. For being able to achieve this books and movie that are mentioned in Introduction part is used.

-To discuss "non-lieu" in architecture make a link to "genius- logi"

-A popular movie "Terminal" directed by Steven Spielberg in 2003 is analysed

-Each second of the movie has shown a clue about the difference between "being in Terminal" that is non-lieu and "living in Terminal" that is being in place.

- Why the movie "TERMİNAL" is chosen for the concept of Non-lieu' in architectural discussion? Interactions between the cinema and architecture have been investigated in the relevant literature many times from different perspectives because these two

disciplines have taught each other new ways of seeing and producing. The interaction between the cinema and architectural concepts starting from place can be regarded as a point of intersection where films play a role in the formation of architectural circles. The text aims to revise, through the cinema, the questions of what does non-lineu mean? How does a non-lineu place transform home? What are the tools of non-lineu places? -The balance of contrast namely "non-lieu" and "genius logi" is contrast analysing has been brought new synthesis (Bala 2007) (Figure 1).
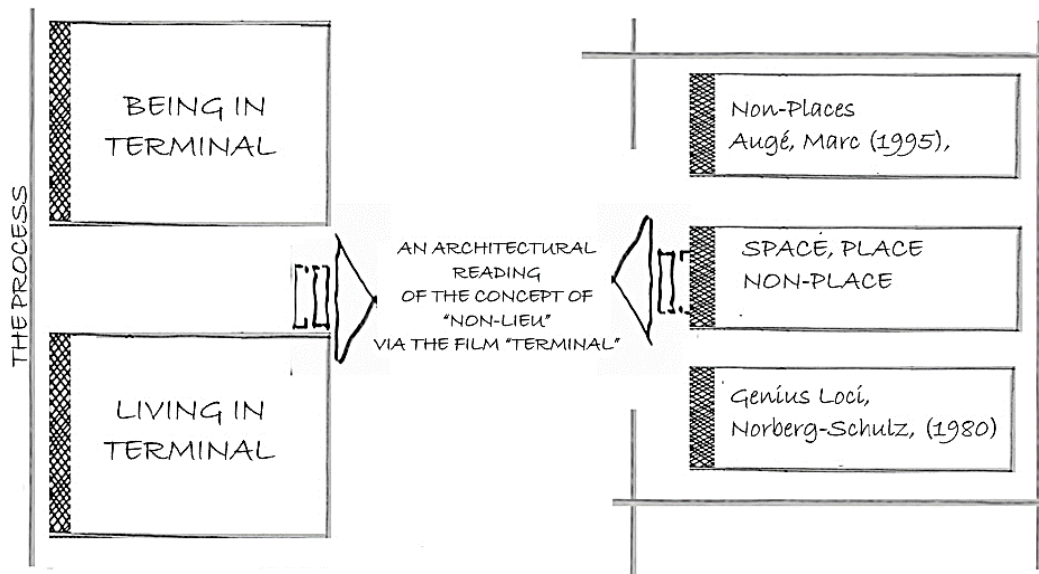

Figure 1. The concept of 'non-lieu' requires wide approach and deep discussion with Marc Auge's book and the movie of Terminal

Interactions between the cinema and architecture have been investigated in the relevant literature many times from different perspectives because these two disciplines have taught each other new ways of seeing and producing. Cinema and architecture have had a substantial cultural partnership during the twentieth century and cinema in the early twentieth century helped Modernist architecture look modern (Macarthur, 2006). The interaction between the cinema and architecture can be regarded as a point of intersection where films play a role in the formation of architectural circles and in the inclusion of these circles in people's lives. According to literature there are three types of relationship-interaction between cinema and architecture;

1-"unbuilt", virtual architectural area that is not being used in reality (Pallasmaa, 2008),
2-cinema reproducing the "real" architectural spaces in its own virtual universe (Koeck, 2013),
3- cinema taking "the architects as a personality and his/her architectural activities" (Tanyeli 2011). As a means that presents different stories from different cultural sources

and different technological infrastructures through different points of view and enters into dialogue and interaction with itself by virtue of its nature, the cinema establishes an alternative space and even time relationship (Aytas et all, 2015), (Akbal and Akalp, 2004), (Ratinam, 2005), (Bala, 2015).

This study makes mention of films as fourth group that deals with the common concept of architectural field and cinema like Terminal. In this study, the concept of non-place/non-lieu was opened up for discussion via the film Terminal (Steven Spielberg, 2003, ABD) on the basis of the phenomenon of "place" in architecture.

Architecture Deals with Place

Human beings have to define a place in universal chaos, bring to that chaos an order which their own logic can comprehend and specify their own place in this order (Gür 1996). If they cannot achieve this, what they will face is an indescribable fear. This fear is so strong that human beings even run the risk of postponing meeting their most basic needs in the face of this fear (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Fear of losing identity, belonging and lacking sense of place (from the Terminal movie when Victor is learned that he become a stateless and homeless person according to international law)

The feeling of belonging carries with it the feelings of recognition and confidence and eliminates fear. The feeling of place as opposed to non-lieu will add meaning to human beings' habitats and lives through emotions beyond what is physical. In this way, human beings will be able to meet their needs appropriately, make their relationships permanent and convert their place into one different from others through interventions they carry out, hence satisfying their need to produce. The concept of the spirit of place (genius

loci) is a phenomenon that is analysed on the basis of the concepts of "space" and "character" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). According to Norberg-Schulz (1980), since the time they came into being, human beings have tended to create places "that demonstrate the essence of existence". According to Schulz (1980) again, spaces are specified with prepositions whereas places are specified with names. In other words, spaces stand out with topological relationships whereas places stand out with the meanings of names. The organic connection between space and place originates from the spirit of place (genius loci). Explaining the phenomenon of place through "residing/dwelling", Heidegger (1971) states that throughout their lives, human beings create places where they can reside safely using the distance between the sky and the earth. The criterion of the concept of "place" sometimes describes a building and sometimes an internal space or a city square.

In the analysis, the space is a three-dimensional organization of elements constituting a place whereas character is the atmosphere of that place. With the spirit and physique and the abstract aspects of mathematical sciences it involves, the place contains different dimensions beyond the space it deals with. While the "space" can be defined with reference to its physical characteristics, the place is unique and special. Any living environment that can satisfy all requirements and special sensations of the user in fact describes a clime called "aura" or "atmosphere" and creates a sense of place (Aydınlı 2003). The "place" is in fact the space where one lives and which requires an intuitive comprehension. Objective data captured intuitively in the living space constantly change and undergo transformation. In short, the concept of place contains the concept of space within it. The place is the energy which the space possesses. This energy carries all kinds of data, physical, cultural and individual history and inputs belonging to the environment. Although space may resemble one another as a result of the way they are organized and arranged, they are unique in terms of the energies they possess.

"Non-lieu" is a word that is used to refer to places that do not possess a sense of "place". The first to use the notion of the 'non-place' was the urban planner Melvin M. Webber (1964) in his paper. "The Urban Place and the NonPlace Urban Realm. Over the last two decades, non-places and phenomena related to them have only proliferated as for instance the number of airlines and destinations, parking lots and gigantic shopping centres has significantly increased(Mirjam et all 2015).In his article entitled "Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity" (Augé, 1995)and in his book bearing the same title, the French anthropologist Marc Augé mentions the terms of "nonlieu"-"non-place", which are defined as being non-place or non-space. One of the most effective ways of explaining a phenomenon on a conceptual level is to refer to the antonym of that concept. Understanding the concept of "place" would be an effective way

in order to understand the phenomenon referred to as non-lieu, non-place or non-space. When analysing spatial typologies specific to supermodernity, Augé (1995) argues that spaces such as airports, expressways, supermarkets, shopping malls and hotel rooms involve or describe "non-lieu". Non-lieus are places such as expressways, cash points and airports or large shopping malls that have been built to allow speedy circulation of human beings and commodities3. Non-lieus do not resemble categories of space that we are used to. Memories cannot be accumulated or one cannot talk of historicity in spaces lacking sense of place. There are two fundamental qualities belonging to the non-lieu. The first is that being in those spaces almost always occurs as part of a specific goal. The second is that the use of those spaces requires guidebooks specific to them (Figure 3).
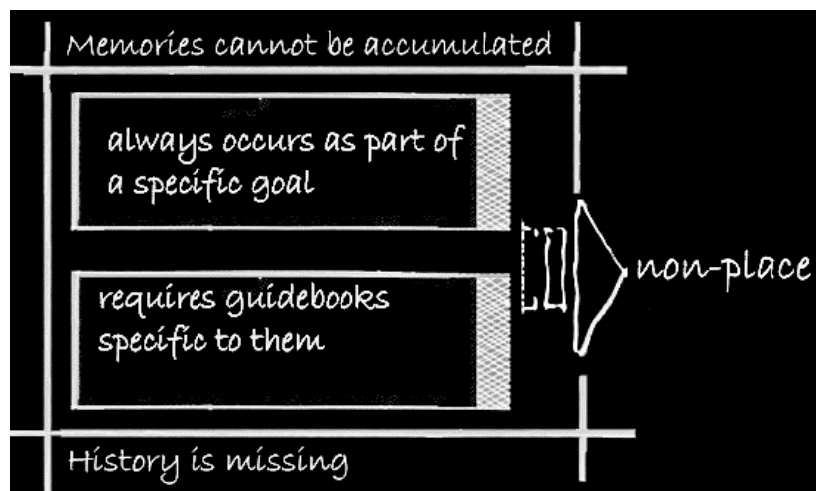

Figure 3. Two fundamental qualities belonging to a non-lieu

Non-lieus offer flexibility to designers to reveal their creativity but remain weak in comparison with other spatial organizations because the functional content of space is mechanical. It is so mechanical that the impact of the architect on design carries the same mechanist. The feature of requiring usage guide books for users, which is included within the definition of non-lieu, also requires planning guide books for designers. Non-lieu transforms the region where it is located. It is against the idea of physical space involving the geographical and cultural characteristics of the region where it is located. It is independent of geography, topography and local values. Non-lieu spaces are, in some cases, common spaces that world cities share as another area of representation for electronic technology (Clay, 1982). When, in the machine age, the manufacture split from the idea the reason for the existence for design became its capacity to make projections about possible futures where our needs would be satisfied for all time (Bremner, 2006). Non-lieu means absence of "privacy", "psycho-social space" and "protected space". The right to have a space, marking or individualization of a space, absence of meeting various needs ranging from basic physiological needs to aesthetic

satisfaction lead to a state of having no place or space of one's own/statelessness. There are also theoreticians who approach positively to spaces called "nonlieu", which carry no sense of place. It is argued that the feeling of place pushes one to conservatism whereas having no place lays the groundwork for being open to new ideas.

Although finding the phenomenon of "Nonlieu" positive or negative is an extension of different views of design, the theme of belonging nowhere has been used strikingly through spatial experiences in the film "Terminal". The film is also interesting in that each point of view that finds the phenomenon of Non-lieu positive or negative can see arguments that are in support of their views.

Terminal

Terminal is one of the spatial typologies belonging to the age of super modernity as defined by Augé (1995). The film Terminal was directed by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks (Viktor Navorski), Catherine Zeta-Jones (Amelia Warren), Stanley Tucci (Frank Dixon) and Diego Luna (Enrique Cruz) shared the lead roles in it. The film starts with the story of a man who experiences a problem during passport control at the Terminal in New York. No clue is given as to the city of New York throughout the film. New York is reflected only with its taxies approaching the gate on the large glass panes of the airport. Apart from that, the whole film is set in this isolated interior space (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Whole film is set in isolated interior space as transit passenger lounge of the JFK airport (John F.Kennedy) airport in New York

Victor Navorski, the hero of the film, is a citizen of Cracosia who does not know a word of English. If one wonders where Cracosia is and looks at a map, they will see that there is no such place. Cracosia is an Eastern European country created in the imaginations of the scriptwriters of the film. What befell many as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the crazes created by capitalism also happened to Cracosia and a civil war began. The government was overthrown as a consequence of the civil war and the world countries refused to recognize the new status quo in Cracosia due to the state of anarchy in the country. In the middle of these developments, Victor, who came to New York adopting his deceased father's dream as a kind of will, becomes stateless during the passport control at the Terminal building. Victor's father was a great jazz fan and had collected autographs of many famous jazz musicians. However, he did not live long enough to find the last piece of his collection. Victor comes to the New World to realize his father's dream by getting the autograph of the last famous jazz musician working in a jazz club in New York and he has no intention of returning to his country without getting it. However, the latest developments in his country as mentioned above make it impossible for him to leave JFK airport in New York. Victor is now a stateless person according to international law. The new authority of the airport is one who is strictly committed to bureaucracy and rule (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Being stateless person force JFK airport in New York is not a place to come and go but to have to stay

He regards Victor's situation as an insoluble legal tragedy and an issue that needs to be laid to rest and his sole goal is to return Victor back to his country. Although he becomes a "completely homeless" person in an alien land and on top of it in a giant airport, Victor will not give up trying to fulfil his deceased father's incomplete dream and his last wish whatever the cost may be. The state of being kept as a compulsory guest in the transit passenger lounge of the JFK airport for an indefinite period, which might also be called a kind of detention, turns the Terminal building, which is devoid of Augé's sense of place, into a "place" and even a home for Victor to live in or stay at (Figure 6).

Figure 6. The International transit lounge of the JFK airport become a kind of prison for Victor

Victor begins to live at the terminal until the uncertainties in his homeland come to an end and gets permission to enter New York freely. The film starts to assume a special importance and provide data for architects from that point on because all spatial arrangements and fields of activity belonging to life and home will be created by Victor at the Terminal building, which is a non-lieu. When buildings are designed by architects, they are designed for specific functions. Architects adopt it as a presupposition that function is the key determinant in serving people and providing a level of comfort. However, the JFK (John F.Kennedy) airport in New York, which is cited in the film and considered to be among the major airports of the world by virtue of its high numbers of incoming and outgoing passengers, assumed the function of a home and workplace for Victor, who had to live in the transit passenger lounge as he became a stateless person. Victor Navorski made a bed for himself by bringing together the armchairs in the waiting room of the Terminal (Figure 7).

Figure 7. The armchairs in the waiting room of the Terminal become bed

He earned money by collecting free trolleys and coins dropped mistakenly (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Terminal become a living space for Victor by earning Money

Victor used the public toilets at the airport as if they were his private bathroom. This is so much so that Victor walked in the waiting passenger lounge dressed in his bathrobe as if he were in his own house, without paying attention to thousands of passengers passing by (Bala 2015) (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Terminal become a living space for Victor by using public toilet as his own bath

Victor got a job in the terminal building by chance. He gave the phone number of the terminal as his phone number while he was filling in a job application form. He removed some of the safety fuses in the lounge to reduce the light that was too much for him, and fell asleep; he also created a working space for himself in the waiting lounge (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Terminal become a living space by using one of waiting lounge become his studying room

As a matter of fact, Victor got and fell in love with a stewardess despite all the troubles he experienced. The terminal building witnessed a sad love story. He decorated a wall panel which corresponded to the legendary dreams of the woman he loved using discarded equipment, thereby creating a unique surface in a public space (Figure 11).
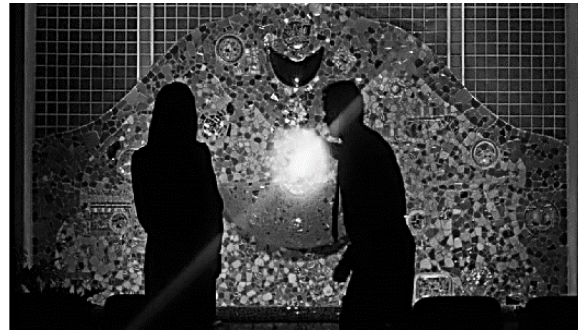

Figure 11. Terminal becomes a living space by a love story and Victor prepares a gift on the surface of Terminal to his lover by changing non-lieu public space to a private one.

Although non-spaces like terminal never contains memories, living in terminal changes that general knowledge. The public space of terminal was transformed into a home, which was a private space, where Victor acted so freely as to walk around in his bathrobe. In short, function was re-interpreted in a way that the architect had not expected and designed. Apart from this objective interpretation, Victor Navorski transformed the Terminal, which was a non-lieu in essence, into a place through his intuitions. The source of the intuitions of an individual and what guides him/her in spaces that generate a sense of place is the phenomenon itself. The experience of the place occurs when an environment that generates a unity of emotions and thoughts is created. The acts of perception and imagination, which turn into one another mutually and replace each other inseparably, reinforce experiential practice. Not having the right to own a space, marking or individualizing an area, and inability to meet various demands ranging from basic physiological needs to aesthetic satisfaction lead to the state of non-lieu. The spaces in the film "Terminal" are typical non-lieu spaces in that they have been built for a specific purpose and there are strict instructions regarding their use. Victor Navorski did not come to JFK airport in New York only to tour or visit. Passengers who use the terminal building are guests. They come and go. However, this situation constitutes a paradox for Victor. In the film, active elements such as incoming passengers, outgoing passengers, those who are in a hurry to reach their appointments on time, and those who go shopping, and fast changing time-tables stand out. These are elements that define the function fulfilled by terminal buildings. The only stationary thing here is the building itself. People who are in the terminal building are passengers. While people move around in accordance with their objectives, they are too busy and hurried to see

what is happening around them. Within this chaos, Victor, who is obliged to live in the international transit passenger lounge, he has become stateless, is helpless and immobile (Aydınlı 2003)(Figure 12).

Figure 12. Terminal is for the passengers who use the terminal building come and go. Victor staying is a paradox

This is so much so that he is stuck in a single space in a country whose language he does not know. As retold by Aydınlı (2003), Perez Gomez (1983) states that the concept of efficiency has changed dimension as a result of the fact that function and economic components in architecture have gained priority. Materialistic modern lifestyle reduces efficiency by leaving experiencing of symbolic realities outside the domain of architecture. Individuals are forced to live in spaces which they have not adopted and hence failed to establish contact with. In fact, being locked in the terminal building is similar in content to confinement of modern people to concrete blocks and urban life.

CONCLUSION

This study states, in conclusion, that a living space contains flexible and relative values in contrast with space which is designed on the basis of rigid and permanent values. The Terminal building, which is one of the spaces defined by Auge as non-lieu, has, as can be seen in the film investigated, been converted into a space that creates a sense of place as a result of the individual's intuitions.

The watching of experiences that do not belong to us at a time that does not belong to the present and in a space perception that is alternative to the feeling of space we are used to is a new context. The space is devoid of gravity in this context and it rocks our sense of distance and everywhere becomes nowhere. It is obvious that a sense of space that starts and ends with being in view coincides with belonging nowhere and having no

homeland of one's own/statelessness. If, through a stark understanding, technology-supported hangar-like boxes come to one's mind at the mention of the phrase non-lieu and if one, with an ideological leaning, tries to explain this term through the term popular culture, it is impossible to find a common ground in the debate, whatever our preferences are. Therefore, one should avoid reductionist approaches when it comes to analysis and theory. As far as the visual experience is concerned in the cinema, especially when one takes into consideration the script and the setting of the film Terminal, it is possible to see the transformation of a volume which is regarded as "non-lieu" space by general standards into a psycho-social field defended by human factor.

Spaces that arouse a sense of place are ones where a mode of "being well" felt in intellectual and perceptual dimensions prevails. By transforming the Terminal, which is a non-lieu, into a "home", Victor Navorski demonstrated that the parameter called function was indeed the objective dimension of architecture and what was important was the intuitive and perceptual dimension. The sense of place emerges through dialectic that constructs perceptual experience and is in fact entirely experiential. In this framework, there are theoreticians who find spaces without a sense of place called "non-lieu" positive. It is argued that a sense of place pushes people to conservatism whereas homelessness paves the way for being open to new ideas. These points of views will usher in new understandings of architecture when architects question anew the rules they assume they know.

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