

## **Reciprocal Architecture – Non-Places That Are Not Fully Such**

*By Amos Bar-Eli\**

*Super-modernity's reality is characterized by non-places, places that cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity. Contemporary architecture struggles with tension between the desire to create 'places', and culture's compulsion of generating non-places. The paper examines the notion of reciprocal architecture, that accommodates conflicting aspects of place and non-place. Traditionally towers functioned as focal places, establishing identity and projecting stability. On the other hand, towers' observation decks can be understood as non-places, advocating superficiality, detachment, and self-referential experience. Through the case study of the 'observation deck', the possibility of reciprocal architecture mechanisms of place/non-place is questioned and theorized.*

### **Introduction**

Architecture's critical discourse deliberates the difficulties of creating meaningful spaces that relate to place, history, memory, and community within contemporary developments and changes in society and culture. This discourse stems from changes related to technological advances emerging since the industrial revolution. The fast processes of urbanity, changes in production, and division of labor, have changed the way society is operating. It has changed our perception of time, psychology, and identity. It gave rise to the proliferation of an architecture that reflects rapid movement, decreased social interaction, and detachment from history and identity. By 1903 German Philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel has already observed the tremendous effects that the new metropolis inflicts on the individual. Already by that period, economic, political, and technological mechanisms have rendered accustomed bonds of identity, history, and place, as redundant. Simmel points out the general regressive effects of the metropolis on the individual, but concludes in a call to refrain from mere critique and an obligation for finding balance, or means of expressing conflicting tensions:

*(it) ...is the function of the metropolis to make a place for the conflict and for the attempts at unification ... it is our task not to complain or to condemn but only to understand.<sup>1</sup>*

Technological advances throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century have by no means resolved architecture's conflicts and tensions, but rather intensified as continuous developments in transportation, communication, and optics have further transformed culture in a

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1. Donald Levine, ed., *Georg Simmel, On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press, 1971 (1903)), 45.

continuous revolutionary process. This evolution is critically interpreted by such thinkers as Walter Benjamin and his conceptions regarding the loss of authenticity of works of art, following the possibilities of photography and reproduction,<sup>2</sup> Tehodor Adorno's critique of mass-culture and the breakdown of ideology following WWII,<sup>3</sup> and the post-modernist concepts of simulacra and hyperreality; the inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality, put forward by Jean Baudrillard.<sup>4</sup> Socially reality is marked by solitude, alienation, loss of stability and continuity, and deteriorating bonds of space, place, history, and identity.

Many architects, and architectural theorist attempted to negotiate possibilities of an architecture that can cope with these currents. These diverse concepts emerged as reactions to, and sometimes practical solutions to the complexities of contemporary reality. The concept of place-making originated from ideas of American activist, and urban theorist Jane Jacobs, as presented in her 1961 seminal book "The death and Life of Great American Cities", advocating active participation of communities in space-making and sharp critique of urban planning ideas, of the time.<sup>5</sup> In the late 60's the Italian group known as Tendenza or 'new-rationalism' advocated a sort of return to ideas of pure enlightenment. They were centered around Aldo Rossi's 1966 (1982 first translated into English) text: "The Architecture of the City". In which he writes of the importance of monuments as expressions of the collective memory of the city, and the idea of place as an expression of both physical reality and history.<sup>6</sup> His ideas were rightly critiqued as:

*...for all their good intentions, (they) amount to nothing more than pure historicism. With their fine words and noble aims, they constitute merely nostalgic attempts to return to supposedly authentic roots...*<sup>7</sup>

In a 1983 article titled: "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six points of an architecture of resistance" Kenth Frampton suggests a dual approach that on the one hand embraces modernist functional and aesthetics, and mixes them with regional uniqueness and historical features, and an attitude marked by 'resistance'. A resistance to contemporary downsides of modernity, alienation from history and place<sup>8</sup>. Spanish architect and philosopher Ignasi de Solà-Morales presents a complex idea of 'weak architecture', which he explains as:

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2. Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," Screen 13, Issue 1, (1972 (1931)), 5-26.

3. Hilda Heynen, "Architecture between Modernity and Dwelling: Reflections on Adorno's "Aesthetic Theory"," Assemblage, No. 17 (1992): 78-91.

4. Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation (USA: University of Michigan Press, 1994 (1981)).

5. Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New-York, USA: Vintage Books, 1992 (1961)).

6. Aldo Rossi, The Architecture of the City (USA: MIT Press, 1982).

7. Rubió Ignasi Solà-Morales, & Sarah Whiting, *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture* (USA: MIT Press, 1997), 63.

8. Kenneth Frampton, Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six points of an architecture of resistance (In Hal Foster, eds., Postmodern Culture (London, UK: Pluto Press, 1985), 16-30).

*...that strength which art and architecture are capable of producing precisely when they adopt a posture that is not aggressive and dominating, but tangential and weak.*<sup>9</sup>

Solà-Morales concept of ‘weak architecture’ incorporates three ideas together: ‘the fold’, ‘the decorative’, and ‘monumentality’. Solà-Morales borrows the concept to ‘the fold’ from French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, explaining it as the diversity and multiplicity of time(times in which the object and the subject move and meet (juxtaposed) as if by chance. As they re-fold back on themselves, as opposed to single time and linear movement. In ‘Decorative’ Solà-Morales points to secondary functions of architecture, not the unnecessary of which the term usually implies to, but to the acknowledgment that only by providing secondary layer\’s architecture can be meaningful. By the last term ‘monumentality’, he aims to embed architecture with lingering effects of memory and recollection, not the classical meaning of monument, but rather the effect of such. Solà-Morales explains this not as a technique but as an effect:

*...as the tremulous clangor of the bell that reverberates after it has ceased to ring...as recollection...(like) the lingering resonance of poetry after it has been heard, with the recollection of architecture after it has been seen.*<sup>10</sup>

As a rejection to culture’s preference for the visual Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa suggest an architecture of the senses, which he refers to in multiple terms, as fragile, weak, sensory, and more often as ‘haptic architecture’. Pallasmaa critic is aimed at the overabundance of images and overemphasis of the ocular, and their dominance in the appreciation of architecture. Pallasmaa advocates architecture that is sensory in regard to whole of the senses: smell, touch, sound, and even taste. Haptic architecture means the totality of the way the senses participate in the experience of space. It also means that architecture and architects should be sensual and sensitive toward the role of time upon materials and eradication of materials.<sup>11</sup> Pallasmaa’s approach gained much applause through architecture schools for its poetic feel and its call for sensitivity, yet it lacks theoretical force and response of social and technological processes that plot contemporary reality.

This brief overview, of some theoretical and practical approaches, shed light on the architectural discourse prevailing throughout recent decades as to what are the possibilities of architecture to relate to contemporary reality. How can we reconcile the loss of sense of place and time with the blessings of technology? Are we only to think of technological issues as a fate, doomed to conclude in dystopia? Should we constantly look back toward the past as if it contains qualities which we abounded hastily and should reclaim now as sort of salvation? I will not attempt to answer these questions but rather look at a conflicting condition within a specific type of architectural space. A spatial place which can understood, using Marc

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9. Solà-Morales, *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture*, 71.

10. Solà-Morales, *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture*, 71.

11. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (New-York, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

Augé's terms, both as a non-place and a place. As such it can be defined as an architecture that balances, by intent or by its nature, the conflicting tensions of contemporary society. As such it is referred to as reciprocal architecture, an architecture that is both a place and a non-place at the same time, an architecture that simultaneously contains and reconciles these two conflicting attributes.

### Non-places and Places

In 1992 the French sociologist and anthropologist Marc Augé first published, what is to become, his most influential book: "Non-Places, An Introduction to Supermodernity" (Originally in French: "Non-Lieux, Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité"), in which he introduced the concept of non-places. The book is a social interpretation of effects and changes caused by technology, urbanization, and most pronouncedly continuous alienation, have on society and the individual. These processes manifest themselves, according to Augé, in the production of non-places, defined as counter to places:

*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.<sup>12</sup>*

Contemporary reality is referred to by Augé as supermodernity. Supermodernity is where history wither to a series of seemingly unrelated fleeting event, space diminishes to panoramic and kaleidoscopic images, and the individual is abstracted to a self-referenced gaze. Supermodernity is characterized by three figures of excess: time, space, and the individual. Excess of time is the accelerated events constantly bombarding us, a constant flood of images and events. News, entertainment, commercial, personal, continually overwhelm us with perpetual demand for attention. It diminishes our ability to interpret, contextualize, or comprehend the relationship between the unrelated events and postulations. Excess of space means the ability to move, travel, experience multitude of places, remote from one another with no apparent sequence or connection. We can travel and experience many places, the planet has shrunk to mere hours of flight, everywhere is just a video chat away. This shrinking does not imply less space but rather the availability of a lot more spaces. And finely excess of the individual, meaning that individuality is referenced only on itself, turning constantly inward, without ability to connect to others. With diminishing of stability, continuity, and sense of community, the individual folds back on the self with overabundance of self-references.<sup>13</sup> In the world of supermodernity the individual loses the ability to understand his position in the continuum of space-time of history:

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12. Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (New-York, USA: Verso, 1995), 63.

13. Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*.

*...the difficulty of thinking about time stems from the overabundance of events in the contemporary world, ... For it is our need to understand the whole of the present that makes it difficult for us to give meaning to the recent past;*<sup>14</sup>

This supermodernity is marked by three major trends that effect our lives and our experience of space. Fast travel and the rise of the tourist industry, image-based experience of space, and the overall ephemeral sense of time resulting in lack of sense of space and history, as such: "(the)... themes that haunt the contemporary era: advertising, image, leisure, freedom, travel."<sup>15</sup>

Tourism, then, becomes central manifestation of the individual experience in today's world. It is the realization in effect of the forms of excess identified by Augé. These currents produce spaces and places in which people pass through without regard for their history or regard for their cultural values. Traveling fast, moving from one place to another, with disregard to its place-ness, without any contribution for its continuation. Consuming events, experiences and fast paced memories, which have only fleeting connection to the history and memory of a place or community. This is done with a focus on the individual whom constructs this experience constantly and furiously, with the aid of the image and its sharing abilities. Architecture, in such a reality, creates places that have no connection to history, identity, or relations, such places Augé explains as non-places. Non-places, and the loss of historical memory, are a direct result of contemporary life in urban technological lifestyle, a lifestyle marked by excess, overabundance of experiences, events, a world contrasting to deeper meanings, growth, continuity, memory and stability.<sup>16</sup> This connection Augé makes between social theory and architectural reality is used as the basis and departure point for this paper.

Augé's ideas have received some critique of neglecting the diverse and complex human experience,<sup>17</sup> claiming that such anthropological scrutiny will resolve to the fact that non-places cannot really exist. This understanding that non-places are fundamentally also places, was also acknowledged by Augé himself stating that non-places are never 'fully-such', they are always also places:

*In the concrete reality of today's world, places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never absent from any place.*<sup>18</sup>

Like Simmel, 90 years before him, Augé also suggests that we are obliged to investigate society's condition, not to think of it as dystopia but rather attempt to understand it and comprehend its possibilities in relation to our experience of space:

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14. Ibid, 25.

15. Ibid, 67.

16. Ibid.

17. See for example: Maximiliano Korstanje, "Non-places and Tourism: Towards an understanding of travel," *Antrocom* 5, no. 2 (2009): 103-106. And Peter Merriman, "Marc Augé on Space, Place and Non-Places," *Irish Journal of French Studies* 9 (2009): 9-21.

18. Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 86.

*The world of supermodernity does not exactly match the one in which we believe we live, for we live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at. We have to relearn to think about space.*<sup>19</sup>

The paper takes this obligation and looked for examples of architecture that can be understood simultaneously as non-place and place. Intertwining their contradictory traits, assuming that a reciprocal equilibrium takes place in architecture and its experience. This opportunity was found, in a most profound way, in observation decks, touristic and symbolic, non-place and place.

### **The complexity of vision and image**

Society gives preference to the sense of vision, and specifically Western culture. Starting from Renaissance understanding of the ability to portray the visible in precise perspective mathematical method. It is by vision that we judge, reinterpret, and examine. It is through vision that the form, mass, and shape of space is made explicit and appreciated. It is by vision that the atmosphere and intangible qualities of space are revealed. This attitude of primacy of vision has been widely acknowledged, as pointed out by Pallasmaa:

*The dominance of vision over the other senses - and the consequent bias in cognition - has been observed by many philosophers. ...western culture has been dominated by an ocular-centric paradigm, a vision-generated, vision-centered interpretation of knowledge, truth, and reality.*<sup>20</sup>

The notion that the gaze is not merely passive but rather have a profound effect was noticed by French Philosopher Michel Foucault in his elaboration of Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon" design for prisons. According to Foucault the possibility of a gaze of a single prison guard, centrally located, ordines and moralizes the many prisoners around him. This power of the gaze is, for Foucault, important for society but can also have dire consequences, "visibility is a trap."<sup>21</sup> French Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre discussed the effects the gaze has upon not only the object gazed on but also the subject gazing. A mutual inter dependency of effects, gazing\gazed, presence\absence of the gaze, eventually, the subject is redefined and established by its own gaze at the same time that its gaze re-frames and defines the objects gazed at.<sup>22</sup> The gaze does not only ordinate, it also establishes reality of cultural space even to the point that a strong enough illusionary vision reaffirms itself as physical presence.<sup>23,24</sup>

The American philosopher and filmmaker Susan Sontag published in 1977 her book titled: "On Photography", in which she argues that the proliferation of

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19. Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 29.

20. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, 16.

21. Ariela Azoulay, in Michel Foucault, *Heterotopia* (Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2003): 61-74.

22. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Le regard* (Tel-Aviv: Resling 2007 (1943)).

23. Henri Lefebure, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1991 (1974)).

24. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New-York* (Tel-Aviv: Babel, 2010 (1978)).

photographic images had begun to establish within people a "chronic voyeuristic relation" to the world around them. Among the consequences of photography is that the meaning of all events is leveled and made equal. Sontag claims that the individual who seeks to record cannot intervene and that the person who intervenes cannot faithfully record, for the two aims contradict each other<sup>25</sup>. French semiotic philosopher Jean Baudrillard is best known for his analysis of media, contemporary culture, and technological communication, as well as his formulation of concepts Simulacra, he explains, refers to copies that depict things that either had no original, or that no longer have an original, and Simulation is the imitation of the operation of a real-world process or system over time. In the text, Baudrillard seeks to examine the relationships between reality, symbols, and society, in particular, the significations and symbolism of culture and media involved in constructing an understanding of shared existence.

In light of the above understandings, it is clear that the visual is not merely the content of the seen, it is always about potential, of unfolding, of possible interpretation, of a hint toward something else that resides elsewhere. There is mental depth in what is seen. Images do not really copy, they rather obscure, make things lose their undeniable and concrete manifestation while in turn, they gain an existence as potential, as open to interpretation. The image opens up windows toward new ideas and feelings which the visible cannot unveil. In turn the visible is neither passive, never completely objective, it is always dynamic and changing, it creates and establishes while simultaneously consumes and flattens. Vision, gaze, image, their role in contemporary society and possible consequences has gained much critical attention, as for example this notion by British architect and theorist Neil Leach:

*A society awash with images will experience a consequent reduction in social and political sensibilities, as the intoxication of the image leads to a lowering of critical awareness, the saturation of the image will therefore promote an uncritical acceptance of the image.*<sup>26</sup>

The complex, simultaneous, sometimes contradictory attributes of gaze\gazed, establishing\consuming, and empty\full, co-existing mutually are essential for the creation of reciprocal architecture.

### **The Touristic Gaze**

As Marc Augé claims one of the main features of 'supermodernity' is travel and tourism. The growth of tourism is a process that goes parallel to technological advances in transportation and the reproduction of images. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century travels were almost exclusively reserved for the wealthy, excited from curiosities and the unknown. Some travelers were seeking cultural affirmation and knowledge, such as what was established as the 'grand tour'. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the attitude toward the environment as "visual consumption" greatly evolved as nature was increasingly

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25. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1979 (1977)).

26. Neil Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture* (London, England: MIT Press, 2000), 55.

connected to prevailing ideas of the sublime, uncanny, and romantic. Consequently, it experienced a growth in mobility, travel, and the emergence of the connection of nature to ideas of leisure, pleasure, and spectacular entertainment. The commercialized technologies of fast, reliable transport, flight and rail, has by the 20<sup>th</sup> century made our planet small and accessible, and the tourism to an industry which is one of the fastest growing and determinant in contemporary society.<sup>27</sup> Tourism its promotion, its construction, economic consequences have become a crucial and conscious endeavor for cities everywhere:

*For old and new cities, the active production of spectacle and consumption opportunities is now a crucial feature of the political economy. In this case, tourism can no longer be a tertiary concern for urban theory.*<sup>28</sup>

Tourism is, predominantly, concerned with sight. The experience of tourism is not restricted to the act itself; it is rather conditioned and re-conditioned. As such it can be seen as having three phases: construction, experience, and re-affirmation. In the first phase preconceptions are established via multitude of visuals, such as guide books, advertisements, movies, etc., these are used to establish connection and anticipation. In the second phase tourists experience the sites\sights by actually visiting them. In the last phase the tourist experience needs to be re-affirmed through the act of photography and sharing of the images collected, this is done in order to establish proof, validating the experience. The vision by itself is not sufficient, it needs to be reaffirmed. In many instances photographing our personal presence within the site, preferably in the midst of the act of seeing is one of utmost importance:

*In most discourses surrounding travel, there is an emphasis on the centrality of the seeing and collecting of sights, sometimes, tourism indeed appears to be understood as little more than the collection of a range of often disparate and relatively unconnected sights, which are then given an objectified form in photographs, ... In some cases, the process of collection comes to dominate the process of travel.*<sup>29</sup>

This complex vision of the traveler appears as detached and unconcerned from the history and sense of place in which it takes place. It is rather much more of a contract with the self and the establishment of a preconceived identity of the tourist. The tourist gains some knowledge of a place he\she is about to see, then sees it, and takes an image of the place which re-establishes the place as important, interesting, and beautiful. This superficial cycle flattens many places to non-places:

*Travel constructs a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape. ... The traveler's space may thus be the archetype of non-place.*<sup>30</sup>

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27. John Urry, "The Tourist Gaze "Revisited"," *American Behavioral Scientist* 36, (1992): 172–186.

28. Richard Lloyd, *Urban Tourism* in George Ritzer, ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (New-York, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013): 1.

29. Urry, "The Tourist Gaze," 177.

30. Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 69-70.



### Observation Decks - Reciprocal Architecture

This possibility of non-places being simultaneously a place, dynamically fluctuate between contradictory attributes, is the main issue of the paper. In order to examine this in real space a concrete example manifesting this contradiction was found in towers' observation-decks. These places are on the one hand a popular tourist attraction, illustrating a superficial view of a city. On the other hand, towers are one of the more profound symbols of stability, beacon of the community, a monument, source of pride and place, and an historical focal point. The ability to view from above provides protection, safety, and deterrence. Together with the gate, the square, and the palace, towers can be considered as the most prominent symbols of place in architecture. On the other hand, and in a complete contradiction, observation-decks on towers are major tourist attractions in almost every city or tower. They provide instant photo-op for seeing a whole city or region in a panoramic, voyeuristic, and conquering overview effortlessly and instantly. Traveling the few minutes up to the top of a tower, spending few minutes taking in the view in all directions of the city, having the few essential photographs, and you can say with certainty: "I have been to..., I have seen the city of ...". In this respect the observation tower has become one of the most genuine non-places we can think of. Bringing such contradictory terms to the fore, observation-decks are a unique example through which the reciprocal place/non-place condition can be examined.

Towers are one of the most visible monuments in almost every city. Manifesting ideas of power, control, and focal point for the identity of the community. Conceptualizing profound human psyche of achievement and superiority. Through practical need for protection and security, to contemporary symbolic monument uniting city's sense of identity, such as Paris's "Eiffel tower", Seattle's "space needle", or Tokyo's 'SkyTree' discussed later in the paper. In a research about relations of continuity, stability, and sense of community in the fast-paced world of supermodernity, British anthropologist Richard D.G. Irvine delineates the role of architecture in defining and sustaining these concepts through visibility and presence of a tower, he states:

*... the Abbey's tower, with its bell ringing out, not only announces the monastery's presence and its continuity with the past; it also asserts the perpetuity of a cycle of prayer which transcends the here and now. ... the tower is a monument to an order which, to all appearances, remains still amidst the vicissitudes of time.<sup>31</sup>*

And further in the research the role of the tower, its function, and the importance of its visibility emphasized even more:

*The individual life cycle of the monk is incorporated within this stable social order, and this is reflected in an architecture which connects all aspects of daily activity. ... This stability, this sense of commitment to place, is part of a monastic self-identity built*

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31. Richard D.G. Irvine, "The Architecture of Stability: Monasteries and the Importance of Place in a World of Non-Places." *Etnofoor* 23, No. 1 (2011): 37.

*on a contrast to rapid movement, fleeting interaction and detachment. ... This is made particularly evident in the Abbey tower...*<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, not contradictory but simultaneously, the observation-deck is most-likely one of the top-rated tourist attractions. One that utilizes vision in its most superficial and flattened manifestations. Tourist wishing to 'see' the city they visit, maybe for only a single day, cannot pass the temptation to view it from an observation-deck. Taking your picture as you view a place from an observation deck is one of the most common fulfillments of the touristic experience. As explained by British tourism theorist Caroline Scarles:

*Photographs and photography facilitate the enlivening and creation of place and experience and ... allow tourists to take part in rather than reflect upon the world. As co-performers, photographs frame place and allow experiences to be created, encountered, and preserved via physical, intellectual, and cognitive activity.*<sup>33</sup>

Augé identifies the space of the interior as relating to identity, and the space of the threshold to relations with others. The interior as the quality of the haptic and human in architecture can be diagrammed as a circle with the hearth at its center, symbolic for values of unity and communality. The threshold is a liminal space within which interactions can take place, stabilizing and redefining relations and continuity. In this quote from Augé, he identifies these qualities in our distant mythological roots:

*Hestia/Hermes couple, Hestia symbolizes the circular hearth place in the center of the house, the closed space of the group withdrawn into itself ... While Hermes, god of the threshold and the door, but also of crossroads and town gates, represents movement and relations with others. Identity and relations lie at the heart of all the spatial arrangements classically studied by anthropology.*<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly the observation-deck answers to neither of those. Its center is a structural core and means of transport, most likely a fast elevator with single destination. Its periphery provides panoramic views, neglecting any possibility of interaction or relations. The fact that the tourist experience of visiting an observation deck is considered a collective experience, meaning it depends on the presence of many for the assertion of its importance (as opposed to solitary experiences of intimacy and reflection), does not imply any human contact with others, they are mere participants in the same activity. It is a place that has many reactions and reviews and as such also generates and receives more responses, from those who have been there to those who plan to visit in the near future. It is marked by its own success. The tower is a much more comfortable\controllable touristic event, compared to the stroll and the wandering. In that respect the cruise can be seen as

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32. Ibid, 45.

33. Caroline Scarles, "Becoming Tourist: Renegotiating the Visual in the Tourist Experience." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27(3) (2009): 466.

34. Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 47.

the horizontal manifestation of the tower\observation deck experience, also a carefully staged\managed\choreographed conquest.

According to Foucault one of the definitions or rather functions of Heterotopia is to establish a space outside of regular spaces, one which stands as a contradiction, that by its distance or remoteness from lived spaces it can accommodate things that are excluded, like brothels or road motels for sexuality, or can be an illusory space which views the disorder and chaos from afar and by this position can reaffirm the real. Foucault mentions 17<sup>th</sup> century colonies and ships, sea going vessels as such heterotopias. This intriguing role of the vision from afar and from a detached privileged position is correlative to the contemporary tower observation deck. It is not necessary anymore to sail across the planet, nor to sneak through back alleys, one can fly to another city, take an elevator to the top floor and from a contained illusory landscape of the observation deck take in the whole panoramic and chaotic reality of a city.

### Examples of Tower's Observation Decks

Three different types of observation decks were analyzed, rather in anecdotal fashion, in other words the towers were not compared but rather looked at separately as for each tower's uniqueness. As such each of the towers (observation deck) was selected for its distinctiveness. Each deck has its uniqueness allowing to portray the idea of reciprocal architecture in elaborate and dynamic nature. The chart provided shows in concentrated form each of the towers distinctive attributes and allows for a quick overview of the three case studies that follow (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** *The Three Towers – Main Attributes*

	SkyTree	Lucca	Tate
<b>Main Observation Deck</b>	455 floor	232 steps	10 floor
<b>Additional observation decks</b>	340 fl. - transparent floor, 345 fl., 350 fl., circular ramp 450-455 fl.	none	restaurant 6th floor on TM1
<b>City</b>	Tokyo	Lucca	London
<b>building type</b>	communication tower	renovated tower-house	museum
<b>placeness</b>	fake' history, choreographed sequence	historical context	public building
<b>History</b>	opened 2012	original built 1384. renovated and opened to public 1980's	addition to TM1 opened 2016
<b>Additional views</b>	Circular ramp, glass elevator, glass floor	windows along the climb	none
<b>View type</b>	closed	open platform	round the building open terrace and some closed area
<b>Viewing enhancements</b>	telescopes, VR stage, night viewing, locator map application	none	none
<b>Narrative enhancements</b>	historical gallery, fake mythology, mascot	advertisement	advertisement, "ceremonial route"
<b>Photography</b>	VR stage, 3 specially designated locations. Exterior mounted "selfie" camera	none	A sign: "Please respect our neighbours' privacy"
<b>Additional facilities</b>	gift shops, restaurants, theme park, historical exhibition, theatre.	giftshop, roof garden	coffee shop
<b>Voyeurism</b>	Zoom telescopes	Along the climb	Proximity to glass apartments

### Lucca Guinigi Tower

The city of Lucca is a picturesque town located on a plain, just north of Pisa in the heart of Tuscany, Italy. Originating as a Roman city, of which its remains are still visible today, it flourished through the middle-ages. Lucca is described as:

*one of the cities most loved (in) all of Tuscany, a stop that cannot really miss in a classic itinerary to the discovery of the region. The city can be visited in a day...<sup>35</sup>*

One of its many charming attractions is the Guinigi Tower. Once part of a tower-house built by a wealthy silk merchant of the Guinigi family. It is a typical example of local Romanesque-Gothic architecture. The height of the tower is 45 meters with a total of 232 steps to reach the top. It was built at around 1384. At that time adding towers to the family house was a necessary addition as the city grew condensed, it allowed some free space with ventilation and vistas. Not less importantly towers served as symbols of power and wealth, a status symbol of the family and its loyalties. As such it highlights a particular trait of human nature, the need to boast oneself and to mark your territory, sometimes via architectural symbols, visible architectural symbols, mainly a tower, the taller the better. Building such towers became sort of a 'craze' in many towns of Tuscany, until they were halted by city officials. Some towns boasted hundreds of towers puncturing their skyline, today only handful remain. The Guinigi tower is one of these historic relics, it was restored and made open to the public at the 1980's. The tower is of historical significance, an essential part of the heritage of Lucca and its residents. Its monumental presence, is visible far around, much more so due to the group of old trees crowning it, symbolizing rebirth and renewal<sup>36</sup> (see Figure 1).

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35. "Discover Tuscany", accessed May 22, 2019, <https://www.discovertuscany.com/lucca/>

36. "Atlas Obscura", accessed May 22, 2019, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/torre-guinigi-guinigi-tower>.



**Figure 1.** *Guinigi Tower Seen from Lucca's Streets*

*Source:* by the author.

The trip to up the 232 stairs, the only way to the top, is rewarded by panoramic view of the city and its surroundings. This experience is considered a ‘must’ when visiting Lucca. According to ‘tripadvisor’ it is the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular ‘thing to do’ in Lucca, actually it means the 4th most visited tourist attractions in Lucca. Visitors reviews from ‘tripadvisor’ mention the climb up the stairs as “worth it” due to the rewarding panoramic views of the city, the relatively low price of 4 euros is mentioned repeatedly, making it even more: “worth it”. One typical of such tourist review is:

*Never heard of the place - was recommended by a friend. What a pleasure, lots of stairs. But the views were great. There are trees on top, a nice touch. Only 4 euros, well worth the climb.*<sup>37</sup>

There are no facilities or explanations of any kind on the climb or on the top, only at the gift shop at the bottom. The observation deck at the top is referred as the “top of the tower” or the “roof garden”. It consists of a square open terrace about 5X5 meters, its central area has brick planters with a group of oak trees in them. Common to all observation-decks that they have gift shops selling memorabilia related to the city and its history and of course of the tower itself. Though promoting, reaffirming, and enhancing the touristic experience while promoting the affirmation of the position of the tower as a symbolic place.<sup>38</sup>

The observation deck (roof garden) is a reciprocal place. It is historical monument with importance and meaning for the community and the history of the region. On the other hand, it is a non-place, touristic point for establishing presence and gaze upon the flat surroundings and Lucca’s old-town roofs. In the touristic experience it stands out by two of its distinct features, uncommon to the many observation decks experience, one is the trees on top, the other is the climb by stairs. The tree garden is a peculiarity, mainly due to the uncommon and strange experience, yet very welcome. More than anything this marks the distance between the touristic, non-place, experience and the historical loaded meaning of the tower as a place. The other is the climb of the stairs. The absence of elevator makes it not only inaccessible but also a difficult problem as a touristic attraction. As one climbs the stairs there are small windows offering various views of the city as you gradually rise through the tower. The lower floors offer a voyeuristic gaze to the experience, as hundreds of tourists climbing the tower gaze curiously into the higher floors of adjoining residential apartments. The climb is thought of as an experience by itself, sort of challenge, reinforcing the view from the top as a ‘reward’ for the worry tourist.

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37. "Tripadvisor", accessed May 22, 2019, <https://www.tripadvisor.co.il/>

38. Jerry C. Jaffe, "Two Views of Japan: The Tower Experience and the Performance of Cultural Identity," *Current Issues in Tourism* (2004): 523-534.

## Tokyo SkyTree

In 1958 the radio\TV communication 'Tokyo Tower' was completed Standing 333m tall it was just a bit taller than the 'Eiffel tower', boasting the new economic\ technological revival of Japan\Tokyo. 50 years past and new demands required a newer, taller tower to be erected. The 634m 'Tokyo SkyTree' was opened at 2012 considered as the tallest tower in the world (excluding towers, the tallest structure in the world is the 828-meter 'Burj Khalifa' in Dubai). It was originally planned 20m lower, but as a response for a 610m tower built at the time in China it was raised to its current height. It replaced the old 'Tokyo Tower' as the main telecommunications tower. In the eyes of many it also replaced it as the symbol of Tokyo, although among tourist the 'Tokyo Tower' still remains an extremely popular site (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The 'SkyTree' High Above the Streets of Tokyo

Source: unsplash.com royalty free image.

The 'SkyTree' has two observation decks one at 350m and one at 450m. The higher observation deck is the pinnacle of a visit to the tower, but the whole tourist

experience is complex and well-choreographed. It includes many gift shops, restaurants, an aquarium, and a theme park. It has a gallery, opened 2018, exhibiting information related to the tower itself, and a theater, called "Find Japan", dedicated for promoting Japanese culture.<sup>39</sup> In addition, it promotes the viewing and self-referential tourist theme by supplying many features that enhance this. VR experience (operational in bad weather), a glass floor, night time viewing gallery, several designated spots for taking photos, a glass elevator called a "shuttle". A VR stage, called "Sorakara Point", providing a virtual surrounding/floating image of the view, it is used for "memorable" self-photographs. One can reach the highest observation deck through a 5 meters ascent by a circular ramp called "Tembo Galleria", enhancing the whole experience:

*Walk the sloped galleria from Floor 445 to Floor 450. Experience the amazing feeling of reaching the summit by walking there on your own two feet.*<sup>40</sup>

These vision related possibilities do not show more, rather their accumulation is more symbolic in character. Their role is to communicate a metaphor of Japan\ Tokyo as a technological and economic success, and a:

*Promise of fulfillment, of a bountiful future, is the implied story, the future-vision offered by the ... Observation Deck. In its highly visible form, it declares a new, better, technological future. But also in ascent, for what better place for the community to join together and watch the birth of the new technopolis.*<sup>41</sup>

The way up is direct, on the way down the elevator stops at every floor, suggesting various attractions, such as gift shops, play areas, lower observations, photo opportunities, and restaurants. Overall, there are 4 types of areas in the tower: Shopping, Entertainment, Viewing, and history related. This corresponds to the need to carefully stage and choreograph the tourist experience, as explained by British researcher Tim Edensor:

*Tourism takes place within meaningful spatial contexts. ... These settings are distinguished by boundedness, whether physical or symbolic, and are often organized – or stage-managed – to provide and sustain common-sense under-standings about what activities should take place. Indeed, the coherence of most tourist performances depends on their being performed in specific 'theatres'. ... Tourist performance is socially and spatially regulated to varying extents.*<sup>42</sup>

The strengthening of the tourist experience, relating heavily on its height and the panoramic view from the top observation deck is a double-edged sword. As the viewing from the top itself is rather an empty, meaningless experience it needs more and more auxiliary additives enhancing this viewing, this turns the whole tower experience to:

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39. "Tokyo SKYTREE" accessed MAY 25, 2019, <http://www.tokyo-skytree.jp/en/>

40. "Tokyo SKYTREE"

41. Jaffe, "Two Views of Japan", 532.

42. Tim Edensor, "Performing tourism, staging tourism (Re)producing tourist space and practice," *Tourist Studies* 1, (2001): 63.



*The overtly commercial character of the layout of the Tower's observatory and other attractions as embodied by the dedication to souvenir shopping surely acts to suggest a narrative of consumerism to those visiting. Even for site guests with no overt interest in shopping, and who imagine a personal experience interacting with the view, must pass through such an environment and be confronted by the consumerist narrative.<sup>43</sup>*

And this has its price, as can be read in a tourist review, which is not common, mainly because its negative, and reviews on general tend to be positive, yet it is telling in the way it sums the touristic experience and its choreography:

*This over-priced tourist trap is worth a miss. It's so crowded you can barely get near a window. They have displays and vendors set up blocking several windows that limits even more your ability to get a view. It's so crowded you have to wait to take the escalator down a floor to get the elevator to the ground floor. The "glass floor" is about 12 panels of glass you quickly walk over in the exit line. Skip this and go to the Metropolitan Government Tower for free. The 45th floor observation deck has great views and you don't have to drop \$50 per person for the view.<sup>44</sup>*

The voyeuristic additive is not missing from this observation deck, the tower boasts zoom telescopes enhancing the meaning of the panoramic view, adding to the tourist gaze a penetrating, intruding, and controlling dimension:

*The high-powered zoom capabilities of these instruments enable one to see into the windows of condominiums and apartments present in the landscape. ...I can peer directly into the private lives of private citizens ....<sup>45</sup>*

The 'SkyTree' promotes its role as both a tourist attraction and symbol of the community via creating a new self-promoted, fake, mythology, stories about the construction of the tower, about its meaning, and made-up myths, all targeted to creating and enhancing its connection to the history and the place. The name for the tower was selected as a popularity contest. 'SkyTree', boasting 30% of the votes, comes from the concept of "a tree growing into the sky", an attempt to convert the rational of the structural engineering into a metaphoric symbol. The height of the tower was capped at 634 meters because the Japanese syllables for 6 (mu), 3 (sa) and 4 (shi) spell out Musashi, the old name for the district in which it stands. On the other hand, names of train stations and areas were converted from their older, "irrelevant", names as to accommodate the new presence. The tower has its own mascot called "Sorakara-chan", literally translated means: "From the sky-chan". Her clothes are imprinted with a design based on the framework of the SkyTree itself.<sup>46</sup> The role of the mascot along with the other narratives is to make a non-place into a place by injecting it with stories and histories that can be verbalized and shared. Creating a sense of continuity and belonging for a place that does not, yet, achieved

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43. Jaffe, "Two Views of Japan", 528.

44. "TripAdvisor"

45. Jaffe, "Two Views of Japan", 528.

46. "Japan Today" accessed May 25, 2019, <https://japantoday.com/category/national/tokyo-sky-tree-mascot-sorakara-chan-introduced>.

them by a natural process of evolution. This is crucial for the creation of a place, as explained by American sociologist Patricia Stokowski:

*No place is a place until things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads, yarns, legends, or monuments. Fictions serve as well as facts.*<sup>47</sup>

### **Tate Gallery New Addition and Observation Deck**

The new wing of London's Tate Modern Museum (TM2) also known as the 'switch house' has a viewing terrace on its top 10th floor. The Tate advances the experience of visiting the terrace as:

*It boasts spectacular 360-degree views of the London Skyline. Enjoy a drink and snacks from the bar as you see across the River Thames, St Paul's Cathedral, and as far as Canary Wharf and Wembley Stadium.*<sup>48</sup>

The museum itself is a spectacular building, an architectural accomplishment of sensitivity and thoughtful cultural value. A large-scale world-class art museum, a renovation of an interesting existing building, and a complex urban redevelopment. The Swiss architecture firm of Herzog and de Meuron scheme for the building was selected following an international architectural competition. They continued to the development of the new wing completing almost a decade of planning in which they designed a world-renowned building and a local urban success, leading a profound change to the whole area as well as a unique approach of museum design. The Tate Modern first and second phases with their many architectural and urban features has definitely created a place.

The new wing, TM2, includes an open viewing terrace on its 10<sup>th</sup> floor. Reaching the terrace there is a small coffee-shop and an open terrace going all around the building. From the modest height of the 10th floor there are views of London and across the river. The panoramic views, as you walk around the terrace, include some unfortunate views of the roof of TM1, and glass apartments to the south just a few meters away from the terrace. The viewing terrace is not spectacular, height wise, neither common part in the art museum experience. The terrace is reached by a separate elevator, allowing visitors to go directly to the terrace without experiencing any of the museum spaces. It is not direct continuation to the rather sophisticated museum interior movement scenario, of which the architects refer to as "the ceremonial route". In the book describing in detail the many ideas and concepts of the design of TM2 the issue of the viewing terrace is not explored, neither mentioned. The viewing platform two problematics, the proximity to the flats toward the south and the view of the mechanical undeveloped rooftop of TM1, are ignored. One chapter is dedicated to an interview with the landscape designer of the complex, Gunther Vogt, as a response for a direct question about the issue he

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47. Patricia A. Stokowski, "Languages of Place and Discourses of Power: Constructing New Senses of Place," *Journal of Leisure Research* 34, No. 4 (2002): 373.

48. "Tate" accessed May 25, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern/viewing-level>.

mentions an idea to create a 'landscaped' roof on TM1, yet this idea was never advanced. Although the London views are extensive, the decision to add the terrace is somewhat obscure. It may be understood as a result of the many observation opportunities abundant in the TM1, that is looking over the river from the 6<sup>th</sup> floor restaurant and the interior views into the large open space of the boiler room. Most likely it is also sort of a chance opportunity arising from the distinct horizontal slits which are a major design feature of the TM2.<sup>49</sup>

The tenants of the apartments just adjacent to the viewing terrace had filed a law suit against the museum, following a trail, it was turned down by the court. The tenants claim was backed by such telling testimonies:

*... visitors 'subject the flats to an unusually intense visual scrutiny', with some 'using binoculars and zoom lenses' to look into the flats. ... 'When our blinds are open and the viewing platform is in use, we are more or less constantly watched, waved at, photographed and filmed by people on the viewing platform.'*<sup>50</sup>

In response the museum claimed the terrace to be: "a valued resource" and suggested the tenants to draw curtains in their apartments, something which they are reluctant to do. The museum ambiguous relations with this view are reinforced by the modest but well visible sign asking visitors to: "Please respect our neighbours' privacy" (see Figure 3). This problematic is noticed by many visitors that share a sense of unease from the situation:

*The views are just great; however, I've got a little bit of an issue with the few nearby residential buildings... it made me feel like a dirty snooper; I don't know who was first, but it just feels plain wrong.*<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 2.** Tate Viewing Terrace Looking "Into" Glass Apartments

Source: by the author.

The viewing terrace itself is a non-place and a touristic experience, very popular, with inconclusive connection to the museum experience, both conceptually and physically. This is evident from common tourists' reviews attesting to this rather peculiar relationship:

49. Chris Dercon, & Nicholas Serota, eds., Tate Modern: Building a Museum for the 21st Century (New York, NY: Tate Publishing, 2016).

50. "Mail Online" accessed May 25, 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6346829/Flat-owners-overlooked-Tate-Modern-viewing-platform-gallery-court.html>.

51. "TripAdvisor".

*We only had the opportunity to make a short visit to the Tate Modern. Although we were hoping to see some of the exhibits, we only had time to visit the viewing gallery on the 10th floor. ... The view over London in each direction is great. Definitely worth including in your trip to London!*

...

*A great alternative to the hassle and expense of getting into the Shard or the Eye. You can get a great view of London from the top floor of the Tate Modern at no charge. 360-degree observation deck, but it's the view across the river that you are probably going for. Learned about this from locals. Highly recommend it ... PLUS-there's the Tate Modern!<sup>52</sup>*

## Discussion

The contemporary reality of supermodernity is characterized by three forms of excess: overabundance of events, spatial overabundance, and the individualization of references. These are manifested in society's preference for travel and the touristic experience, and the creation of non-places. Non-places are defined as contrary to places, though non-places are spaces which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity. In this context the complexities and importance of the gaze and of photography were discussed with the intent of contextualizing non-places and related touristic experience. Re-reading through Augé's concepts of non-places the reservation that non-places are never fully such aroused, not necessarily as critic dismissing the idea of non-places but rather as emphasizing simultaneous contradictions of spaces being at the same time non-places and places. Observation decks on tower tops were analyzed as case study which contains these contradictory concepts, and offered a varied field for exploring the issue. The tower with its observation deck is a place with strong symbolic presence and historical significance that is visually obvious for both the surrounding community and short-term visitors. Its monumental presence is fundamental in creating a sense of place, accentuated by the panoramic view, seeing the whole city/countryside as if controlling, understanding and possessing it. This gaze, from a tower's observation deck, establishes place and at the same time is a manifestation of the touristic 'flattened' experience. This makes the observation deck experience simultaneously non-place and place, reciprocal in nature.

The three observation decks explored in the paper offered multitude of experiences and approaches to the tower and observation experience, sometimes conflicting experiences. The Lucca tower role as an historical place, long gone, is reaffirmed today by the presence of tourists. The touristic experience of place is enhanced by the peculiarity of the garden and by the need to climb its many stairs. This established or rather reestablishes the meaning of the tower as an historical place. Tokyo's SkyTree is functional technological achievement presenting a well-choreographed viewing-experience, branded, and prompted with make-up narrative of historical connotations and mythologies. The viewing terrace of the new Tate Modern in London is an ambiguous unique condition. Strange to the museum experience just as it is for the touristic experience in observation decks. It offers a

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52. Ibid.

multitude conflicting experiences, leaving visitors somewhat confused as to how to relate to it. All three towers offer additional enrichment of the viewing experience. From the modest gift shop in Lucca, to the multi complex entertainment/shopping experience in the SkyTree, to the careful 'walking-among-the-drops' attitude of the Tate Museum. In all of them the erotic and voyeuristic experience is not absent, in Lucca slit windows accompanying the climb, the SkyTrees zoom telescopic lenses, and the Tate's unintended, unplanned proximity to the glass apartments.

For the tourist an observation-deck is not a non-place, such as the airport, the motorway, train station, or elevator, it is a place. It is THE place; it is where the notion of the place is defined and consumed. The photographs he takes are marks and proof for that, by sharing them with others he repeats the prescribed behavior expected, it reaffirms his sense of place. It can be argued that the people who live in proximity to the tower think of the observation deck as a non-place, as non-meaningful way to connect to the history and sense of place, yet the tourist, experiences this in a different way. By viewing from the observation deck the tourist reaffirms his connection and continuation of being in a place, the presence of others strengthens this notion. We cannot dismiss the tower as being non-place, and definitely not solely in the negative sense. We can understand it as reciprocal architecture, much along the same line as suggested by British researcher Peter Merriman:

*... rather than coin a new species of space/place — i.e. non-place — we need to rethink 'place' as open, dynamic, inclusive, relational and in process, rather than as closed off, organic, static and localized.<sup>53</sup>*

It is not a question of 'either or'. It is not about reviving something which is of the past, neither about defining the present as response to utility or demand alone. It is about the understanding or rather of accepting and reconciling with complexities of reality. This is acknowledged by researchers critical of Augé, for example:

*In brief, there is no place in the world that can be named non-place or emptied of sense. Any sites where people pass or reside are spaces with less or more symbolic liaison.<sup>54</sup>*

As well as by Augé himself:

*what for one is a place can be a non-place for other and vice-versa. An airport -for example-is conditioned to the involving eyes of passenger who occasionally are en-route whereas inversely for workers this stand-point will vary substantially on.<sup>55</sup>*

## Conclusions

There exists a possibility of a reciprocal approach. One that respects, equally the nostalgic, historical, and symbolic. One that equally respects the ephemeral

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53. Merriman, "Place and Non-Places", 10.

54. Korstanje, "Non-places and Tourism", 106.

55. Marc Augé, *Toward an anthropology of contemporary Worlds* (Barcelona, Spain: Gedisa, 1998): 147.

attitude of contemporary life, touristic in nature, detached and self-referential as it is. This does not imply that we should treat it without criticism, yet it can be improved only by respecting the needs and attributes of this part of our way of life. We can't advocate vernacular architecture, it is merely anecdotal, even selfish approach. We cannot adopt a modernist functional, utilitarian approach, it leaves society detached and isolated, with no means for creating stability or continuity. It is my continuation that contemporary reality offers the opportunity to understand, positively, places as being reciprocal. An architecture that is not intimidated by its past, nor refrains from altering it, at the same time that it appreciates its relevance and importance. We should create architecture that can balance and reconcile, and at the same time contain conflicts and resist, welcome the other, the detached, and the unfamiliar. Non-places are never fully such, they are an opportunity rich with complex layered experiences, responsive for contemporary reality, culture, and society. An architecture of reciprocal nature, architecture for simultaneous and continuous conflicting reality.

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