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Gilles Delalex

## Non-places:

### The Everyday Experience of Flows

#### Introduction

I once drove from Switzerland to the Netherlands—a nine hour trip through six countries—and I never left the road. From the moment I got into my car, I dealt only with bank machines, gas stations, and a few restaurant chains. Although I crossed many borders, the roads, the width of the reflection lines, the signs, and the intensity of the taillights of the cars all remained unremittingly uniform. Even the cars were similar. All the gas stations I stopped at seemed familiar, like I had already been there before. The endless repetition of their logos and canopies all along the road gave me a reassuring “feeling of recognition.” When I called my family to say I was halfway there, I almost felt like I was already home because practically everything I saw along the road could also be found back home. In fact, the only things I had to use were generic infrastructures: the highway and its services, my mobile phone, my credit card. These infrastructures were so well integrated and intertwined with one another that I was hardly aware of my use of and reliance upon them. But the feeling of recognition and familiarity that came from being immersed in these generic infrastructures coincided with another feeling, that of being continuously observed and controlled. As I withdrew cash from a bank machine, it occurred to me that my credit was being checked while video cameras filmed each of my movements. Everywhere I went, small stickers on gas pumps, cash machines, and shop windows warned

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that criminal activity would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Meanwhile, the roadside was replete with signs giving instructions, directions, cautions, and warnings. At one point I was even commanded to slow down by the sudden flashing of a warning sign that was linked to an automated speed monitor. I realized then that all the recurring signs and monitoring devices punctuating my trip were actually part of the same security apparatus. I could have been terrified, yet I felt terribly safe. This experience of driving along a highway through Europe gave me the sense that I was like a micro-particle within vast flows of people and signs, the statistical unit of a repetitive and programmed sequence of exchange, cutting across borders, and tying cities and countries together in a global "space of flows."

The recent intensification of economic exchanges and social interaction on a global scale has created a new spatial form dominated by a logic of flows. This logic has influenced both the rise of major world cities like Tokyo, London, and New York, and the weakened position of secondary cities. Yet, a question remains: how does the global logic of flows translate into the production of our everyday built environment? How does it construct urban realities and affect the way we experience urban spaces? To answer this question, I juxtapose Manuel Castells's concept of the "space of flows" with Marc Augé's notion of "non-places" to argue that there is a correlation between the spatial manifestation of flows and the vast range of generic spaces that are now emerging along networks of transportation and communication. Non-places are places we move through as we drive down a motorway or wander through supermarkets. They are places of transit which rely extensively on the standardization of space and on the correlative control of the people passing through it. In this article, I propose to draw the link between non-places and the global space of flows, which Castells opposes to the real space of places, around the notions of standardization and control. I suggest that both processes can be understood as the necessary means to deal with the erratic character of flows and the risks and uncertainties inherent in long distance communication and travel.

My aim is to extend our understanding of the physical manifestations of global flows, which for Castells is typified by elitist and secluded airport VIP lounges and international hotels, to a more inclusive and open arena. I propose to excavate the more ordinary experiences of global flows by illustrating how they intersect with the physical realm of our everyday lives. Although Castells sees the acultural and ahistorical postmodern architecture of global cities as material expressions of the space of flows (1992, 421), he maneuvers around questions concerning everyday material experiences of flows by over-emphasizing their symbolic expression. For Castells, the ostentatious architecture of banks and international corporations archetypically symbolize

the pre-eminence of the network society. While this is a pertinent aspect of the articulation between urban spaces and the logic of flows, his argument fails to capture the integral role of discrete transitory spaces in this articulation. If transitory spaces do not appear in Castells's argument, we can suppose that it is because they carry very little symbolic value. We are now so accustomed to their presence that we often do not even notice them, and their banality makes them so invisible that we often fail to recognize their social and functional relevance.

Instead of considering the places we inhabit when we are driving our car or sitting in airport lounges as the Freudian slips of the collective unconscious, I wish to look at them as both deliberate responses to global phenomena and clear expressions of how flows materialize in urban space. Using Augé's anthropological approach allows us to recognize that the logic of flows permeates through the whole realm of lived experience. Non-places call into question Castells's strict opposition between flows and places by suggesting that during certain intervals of space and time we live directly within the space of flows. The common urban places we inhabit are therefore neither indefinitely untouched by nor radically opposed to the global logic of flows.

I will begin by outlining the opposition Castells sets up between the space of flows and the space of places, and then offer Doreen Massey's conception of a "global sense of place" as an example of theorizing place in a way that does not require its diametrical opposition to the growing influence of global interaction. I will then discuss Castells's argument that the impact of the space of flows on major urban agglomerations necessitates the development of massive infrastructures to support and articulate global flows. I then argue that the place-based influence of the logic of flows, if it is explicitly described in the case of world cities, is in fact not limited to a few dominant nodes. On the contrary, its logic is discretely diffused among transitory places throughout the entire extent of infrastructures. Following Augé, I argue that amidst the ever-expanding sphere of our experienced environment, the standardization and generic quality of those places of transit provide us with cognitive assurances that help make us feel at home wherever we are in the world. These cognitive assurances, which rely on the relentless recurrence and self-similarity of non-places, become a key to understanding how place serves as a physical articulation through which we experience global flows.

The flipside of the standardization of space, however, is the increased control of individuals whose uses of non-places are mediated and regulated by signs. The countless texts and slogans displayed on screens, signboards, or posters make the rules that define non-places so explicit that they discourage all actions that may interfere with their strict functions of transit. I attempt to explain below why this narrow mediation so profoundly affects all possibilities of interaction, devi-



ance, and conflict within non-places. My thesis is that intensified control, as well as other features of non-places such as the abstraction of space and its standardization, are intended as a response to the erratic character of flows and to the instabilities inherent in their wild and variable geometry. Ultimately, this theorization of non-places endeavors to extend Castells's arguments regarding the space of flows to include the idea that non-places are expressive of an everyday material experience of global flows.

### A Global Sense of Place

In order to relate the logic of flows to urban processes, Castells concentrates in particular on global cities as the major places of the production of flows. Indeed, cities in the post-industrial economy thrive upon a diversified flow of tourists, capital, and information. Cities' dependence on flows is not itself a new thing, but the nature and intensity of these flows has changed dramatically in the last half of the twentieth century. New theories have emerged which attempt to explain the relationship between global flows and urban spaces, and by introducing the concept of the space of flows, Castells provides such a theory. He argues that the recent intensification of global exchanges has created a global space of flows which tends to supersede the traditional space of places (1989, 348). Whereas the space of places still rests on notions of proximity and physical contiguity, the new space of flows is constituted by the simultaneity of numerous events and interactions over long distances. Castells explains that places do not actually disappear, but are instead absorbed into the logic of global flows:

Experience, by being related to places, becomes abstracted from power, and meaning is increasingly separated from knowledge. It follows a structural schizophrenia between two spatial logics that threatens to break down communication channels in society. The dominant tendency is toward a horizon of networked, ahistorical space of flows, aiming at imposing its logic over scattered, segmented places, increasingly unrelated to each other, less and less able to share cultural codes. (1992, 428)

If we accept this dialectical opposition between flows and places, the space of places, as the basis of identity formation and political empowerment, should inexorably shrink, and thereby endanger the space of our everyday lives.

I would argue that Castells's dialectic, which fundamentally opposes flows to places, is too reductive to support a progressive conception of places. Another option is to turn this radical opposition into a question of balancing different degrees of connectedness within a spectrum. Instead of regarding places as static, we can view them as being imbued with the fluid and dynamic properties of flows, and as expressive of the growing influence of global interaction on our lives. They

still construct themselves from the specific convergence of various networks and relations, respectively relating to different scales of involvement. But as they are increasingly crossed by investment flows, cultural influences, and satellite TV networks, they realign themselves in relation to new global processes. From this conception of places, Doreen Massey argues that it is possible to envisage places in a way that is not strictly opposed to their outside. She asserts that, "in an era when you can go abroad and find the same shops, the same music as at home, or eat your favorite foreign-holiday food at a restaurant down the road—and when everyone has a different experience of all this" (151), it is possible to develop a sense of place which is *progressive*; not self-enclosing and defensive, but outward-looking and extraverted. Places, she says, can be imagined as particular moments in networks of social relations and experiences constructed on a far larger scale than the place itself—whether the given place is a street, a region, or I would argue, a singular node within the widely diffused network of non-places (154). Therefore, we should not think of places in terms of a simple counterposition to their "outside," or through a strict opposition to the growing influence of global flows, because it is precisely their relations to this *constitutive* "outside" which define their shape and identity.

By elaborating on our common experience of non-places, I wish to posit a sense of place which is commensurate with a space of global flows wherein we travel more frequently and for longer distances. The vast network of non-places is so globally dispersed that it simply cannot be mapped, yet it recreates places, and provides us with an adequately progressive sense of place that is compatible with the global space of flows and the feelings and experiences it gives rise to. Thus, I think that it is possible through non-places to envisage an alternative interpretation of places, one that aligns more closely with what Massey calls a new "global sense of place."

### Cities Within the Logic of Flows

In *The Informational City*, Castells (1989) highlights the central role of cities in the production and processing of information (147). He argues that the recent transformations of American and European cities have resulted from the domination of trans-national flows of information and capital. Central to my argument is Castells's acknowledgement of the development of loosely interrelated exurban constellations, and the global connectedness of cities that are otherwise physically and socially distant. This approach emphasizes the importance of infrastructures that allow communication and exchanges between the scattered urban units of global cities.

In Europe, where rising inter-urban competition makes interaction and interdependence between cities stronger than ever, the logic of



flows should also be acknowledged. On one hand, this logic exists at the core of the urban fabric of cities, despite the fact that they are not "edge cities" or megacities such as Pearl River Delta. On the other hand, medium-size cities involved in the European economy draw the base of their economic and cultural development from their interaction with other similar second- or third-rank cities. For instance, Glasgow, where cultural policies have been particularly prominent in the 1990s, has situated itself within a whole "league table" of competitors ("Joining the Culture Club" 2000). Amsterdam, Barcelona, Manchester, and Lille are among Glasgow's primary competitors, and Duisberg, Dortmund, Liverpool, and other less obvious American cities such as San Antonio, Tampa, or Tulsa might also be included. This effectively demonstrates how the logic of flows acts not only between continents but also between relatively close cities like Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow, and how it anchors itself in a more diffused manner than the pattern of archetypal world cities suggest. The space of flows occurs at many levels and many scales. Not only does it draw lines of intense exchanges between "smart" and over-wired cities and economic regions, it is also active at the regional scale, at the urban scale, and at the level of our physical and material experience of places.

#### Generic Infrastructures

With the logic of flows illustrated at the urban and interurban level, I will now turn to the evidence of such a logic at the level of urban infrastructures. I hope to demonstrate that the latter define the places—or, rather, the non-places—where we experience the everyday materiality of the space of flows. To define non-places, Marc Augé uses the concept of "supermodernity," a concept which relates to Castells's network economy in that it is also based on the excess of information (1989, 136). Yet Augé adds two more figures of excess: the excess of space and the excess of events (Augé 30). For him, the excess of space is paradoxically correlative with global connectedness and the resulting shrinking of the planet. The excess of events refers to the increasing amount of cultural signs and images we have access to through the media. Indeed, the more every single part of the world is interconnected by networks, the more we experience simultaneous visions of an event taking place on the other side of the planet, such as Princess Diana's death or the war in Timor. By adding the excess of space and of events to Castells's excess of information, Augé highlights an aspect of the network economy that we can feel and experience, both physically and emotionally. He links abstract processes of de-localization and long distance interaction to the concrete production and experience of space and events. And it is out of the triangulation between these excesses of supermodernity that non-places emerge and proliferate.

Non-places are not themselves anthropological places, Augé ex-

plains, because they neither include memory of any particular locale nor integrate the traditional places of history (such as Castells's space of place). Instead, non-places partake of:

A world where people are born in the clinic and die in a hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines, and credit cards communicate wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce. . . . (78)

Travel-related spaces such as airports and road systems are perhaps the archetypal example of non-places (Augé 86). But non-places, according to Augé's definition, include much more than the spaces travelled exclusively by business people, tourists, and commuters. The different networks involved in the movement of people and goods intersect with many other networks such as publicity and advertising apparatuses. These networks intermingle and accumulate into a complex system that stretches out to the furthest reaches of communication media. Non-places find their breeding ground along the complex and ubiquitous systems of infrastructure that support the flows of goods, people, and information. They occur along the extended trajectories of communication and transportation networks, and they belong to the vast realm of generic infrastructure. Non-places, through their mediation and dissemination of texts and images, belong to the global mediascape of newspapers and magazines as well as the places where one buys them.

#### Effects of Recognition

Within the ever-expanding sphere of our experienced environment, a recurrence of familiar images and a generic quality of space helps us feel at home wherever we are in the world. As the proliferation and endless repetition of non-places induces a vast process of standardization of urban spaces, it also produces "effects of recognition" that provide us with cognitive assurances (Augé 106). Indeed, the recurrence of motorways, service stations, hotels, and restaurant chains acts like a semantic and spatial Esperanto, allowing foreigners to feel at home no matter where they are. The diversity of visual feelings that we experience in non-places— "the color variations in the fluorescent lighting of an office building just before sunset, the subtleties of the slightly different whites of an illuminated sign at night" (Koolhaas 1250), the curves of a highway interchange, the different degrees of reflection of a glass façade, the Helvetica letters of the signs sequencing our transit through peripheral commercial zones—have come to participate in a recursive



and now global aesthetic of urban space. If this generic aesthetic is often perceived as alienating, especially when it invades our most intimate spaces, it also becomes familiar and reassuring when we are far from home.

Since they are spread over millions of kilometers of networks, non-places resist simple mapping. Imagining non-places requires bringing together all of the spaces that take part in the domains of travel, consumption, and leisure. Nonetheless, their recurrence and ubiquity points to a new urban condition which is not discerning of local specificity, a generic condition which shapes cities all over the world. This new generic condition of cities does not construct itself through local differences, but rather through the recurrence of signs and the repetition of identical urban patterns on a global scale. We might think that this only results in a uniform and homogenous space without variations or reference points. But the recurrence of identical signs and spaces carries its own system of reference that allows for a new kind of identity which is based not on the specificity of places, but on repetition.

Global effects of recognition illustrate the fact that the urban aesthetic of non-places takes part in an ubiquitous mediascape which stretches urban space out to the global scale of communication networks. Here, the term "mediascape" is intended to incorporate the fading distinction between the physical means of media dissemination, the images of places created by the media, and the places themselves. Arjun Appadurai, in an account of the global city, refers to the notion of mediascape both in terms of:

The distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, film production studios, etc.) which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world; and the images of the world created by these media. (330)

Like Appadurai's conception of mediascape, non-places illustrate a convergence between the physical media (and the places we physically experience) and the various images and aesthetic they disperse. Augé also makes this argument when he relates non-places to the "cosmology" created by the intersection of different media (106). Radio stations, major chain stores, travel agencies, magazines, and airline companies intersect with each other by means of commercial purpose, and the repetitive circulation of images associated with these interactions constructs a cosmological system that serves as a defining characteristic of non-places. As the distribution of news and advertisements on TV and magazine covers, on the one hand, and the physical means of transport or leisure, on the other, interact and intersect with one another in non-places, the concept of urbanity is repositioned in a much wider arena: an arena which includes a vast range of transitory spaces

intrinsically associated with the familiar images and generic aesthetic they carry. They come to represent the symptomatic stretching out of identical and now familiar urban images across the world.

Although non-places seem identical, they still constitute reassuring patterns, and therefore carry a sort of identity—an identity that is based, once again, on repetition rather than on specificity. They constitute the now "obligatory" generic part of places which allows strangers to find a reassuring familiarity of images as they pass through places. Like recurring clichés, images and places which have been so widely disseminated that they have become "common-places" construct a world of their own. This is a world that people inevitably come to experience in their everyday lives, a point of reference with which to identify when they travel or live abroad. Again, this conception weakens Castells's strict distinction between a generic space of flows and the space of places and everyday experience. Non-places resist this opposition as they articulate the dominant logic of global flows of information and images into a new "global sense of place."

#### Texts, Abstraction, and Control of Space

Another notable feature of non-places is the increasingly controlled relationship between individuals and their surroundings. In non-places, the link between individuals and the space through which they move is extensively mediated by words and written signs. We are well aware that particular words evoke strong images of places. Augé argues that such places are abstracted by the very text that portrays them because their textual portrayal supersedes their physical reality. Indeed, "certain places exist only through the words that evoke them and, in this sense, they are non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés like Tahiti or Marrakech" (95). But the textual abstraction of non-places does not refer solely to clichés and far-off places. The many instructions for use, which may be prescriptive, prohibitive, or informative—fasten your seat belt, slow down, enter your code—participate in the very definition of non-places. Thus, if we agree that these are the rules of a place which define it, set limits upon its uses, and distinguish it from others, then we can say, in turn, that the function of signs and texts displayed in non-places is to explicitly transmit the rules that define them. It is not accidental, then, that most of the signs encountered in non-places refer to a ruling organization—the state, the city, or the private company that owns the place:

This establishes the traffic conditions of spaces in which individuals are supposed to interact only with texts, whose proponents are not individuals but "moral entities" or institutions (airports, airlines, Ministry of Transport, commercial companies, traffic police, municipal councils); sometimes their presence is explicitly stated ("the state is working to improve your living



conditions"), sometimes it is only vaguely discernible behind the injunctions, advice, commentaries, messages transmitted by the innumerable supports (signboards, screens, posters) that form an integral part of the contemporary landscape. (Augé 96)

The replacement of place by digits, words, phrases, or icons is symptomatic of an abstraction of places. But if written signs inevitably abstract places from their reality, they also actively shape the space of non-places by addressing customers or travellers in very explicit terms. When texts have the function of setting the rules of behavior that define places, then it becomes clear that they induce a very unambiguous mediation primarily meant to simplify the reading of space and control the movement of people. This control of people through signs and texts is particularly obvious in airports. With their voice recorded signals and their color coded maps and signs, airports have become perhaps the most intensively regulated zone of common experience:

The combined threats of narcotics and terror have given rise to unprecedented levels of policing and surveillance. Credit and passport checks, magnetic screening, irradiation of luggage, baleful agents vetting security profiles, sniffer dogs: such are the quotidian experiences of air travel. Indeed, every year billions of people pass through the airport security apparatus, terrified and terribly safe all at once. (Sorkin 221)

Texts in airports, as in other non-places, make rules explicit and commonsensical. It is understandable that these rules must be as basic and universal as possible if they are meant to address individuals of many nationalities or cultures. As a result of this minimization of interpretation, however, all movements or interpretations that may interfere with the primary and intended functions of non-places are, indeed, very limited. Thus, what Augé underscores with his discussion of texts and signs is that their display in non-places is symptomatic not only of an excess of information but also of an excess of control.

#### A Response to Erratic Flows

In summary, two main features characterize non-places. First, a process of standardization results in effects of recognition. The recurring signs and aesthetic of non-places, indiscriminate of the surrounding context, create the "cosmology" described by Augé—the homey feeling of the foreigner wherever she or he finds familiar chains of hotels and gas stations. Second, the textual abstraction of the space of non-places and the excess of control of their users regulates the scope of action and restricts the initiatives that are possible within them. These features are complementary in that they both constitute a response to the unpredictable trajectories and the erratic nature of flows shaping non-places.

My argument here is that these remarkable characteristics of the new places of "supermodernity" justify themselves by being more or less explicit responses to the feeling of uncertainty that is intrinsically present in the logic of flows. As Castells describes it, the variable geometry of the space of flows engenders an increasingly weakened position of locale within the global economy. Indeed, the space of flows is characterized by a paradoxical structure; although its hierarchy is strongly anchored in the prominent role of world-cities, second and third rank cities or regions hold very uncertain positions. Cities and regions can either reach higher ranks if they succeed in attracting more and more flows of capital, tourists, or European subsidies, or they can be stripped of their former importance. This occurs through processes of connection and disconnection which imply that cities, in choosing to put their name on the world map, undertake risky strategies, and therefore accept a high dimension of uncertainty. This risk especially rests on the fact that they link their fate to the converging flows of money and people, the trajectories and content of which undergo wide-ranging variations over time. Indeed, the variable geometry of the space of flows described by Castells includes not only big companies but also locales, which have uncertain positions and therefore must get involved in risky ventures to improve or simply sustain their former positions. The notion of uncertainty, therefore, is inherent in the logic of flows.

The cosmology created by the reproduction of similar and standardized places plays extensively on the uncertainty and the risks involved in flows of people by assuming a reassuring role for travellers. The global banality of non-places all over the world reduces differences among countries and cities and recalls home to the traveller. Furthermore, texts that take over the meanings of places reduce the risks of human malfunction and the feeling of uncertainty by setting predetermined directions whereby risk has been explicitly and visibly minimized. Highways and highway travel, for instance, reflect a whole set of such texts. Highways themselves evince the presence of numerous systems of expertise that govern the shape of the highway, its dimensions, its trajectories, as well as its everyday maintenance and usage. Arrows replace the physical topography to indicate a limited number of choices—right, left, straight—while the various maps, travel books, and brochures used by travel agents replace the actual terrain of hills, valleys, streets, and districts with prearranged routes and informational icons. The limits of safety are therefore clearly indicated by means of texts and standards, ensuring that the efforts of highway companies and travel agencies are made visible. Moreover, their clientele has little choice but to trust them and maintain a purely contractual relation with his or her surroundings, with signs serving as a reminder of the existence of this implicit contract.



Texts therefore act like insurance systems which attempt to avoid physical risks by setting up a system of precautionary rules. Meanwhile, the aesthetic standardization of non-places acts as the visible proof that maximum efforts have been made to diminish the risks and reassure the traveller. Recurring icons and texts, standard spaces, and the cosmology they create shape non-places as responses to the uncertainty of travel. Both the control that is exercised over people and goods and the process of standardization that shapes generic places represent the local regulations that are necessary to reduce the risks inherent in the wide-ranging movements and uncontrollable trajectories of people, goods, and information. If we definitively consider non-places as access points through which the logic of flows enters into our spatial experience of everyday life, then their functions of control and standardization can be considered as the responses to the perpetual variations of these flows. They draw the theoretical link between the abstracted textuality of non-places and the variable geometry of the space of flows.

#### Beyond the Rules of Movement

Non-places represent a spatial condition emerging each time locales need to connect themselves to trans-national networks and establish a generic articulation. If "non-places" seem to stand in opposition to a "culturally grounded" notion of place, they do not actually contradict them. In fact, places recreate themselves within non-places. Non-places do not exist in pure form because social interaction reconstitutes itself within them, and "relations are restored and resumed in [them]" (Augé 78). This happens through at least two different forms of appropriation: the juxtaposition of places and non-places, such as when cash machines or a McDonald's restaurant are inserted in an existing district; and the making of non-place into place through a transgression of the rules, such as when young kids of the Parisian suburbs occupy malls in constant skirmish with guards.

If transgressions of rules are constitutive of the intrinsic instability of global flows, they also come as an opportunistic response to the uncertainties of their global logic, suggesting an alternative use of non-places. Each time an unpredictable event occurs—a plane crash, a car-bomb attack—each time a strike grinds a company's productivity to a halt, or each time a country closes its national borders, the rules of movement are contravened and the logic of flows is partially disrupted or reoriented. This also happens when individuals or communities attempt to settle temporarily in non-places; they transgress their strict function of transit, and respond to the instability of flows by opening-up new ways of inhabiting the flow and re-appropriating non-places. At the outskirts of Paris, for instance, homeless people squat in the halls of Charles-de-Gaulle airport. Excluded and pushed out the mar-

gins of the city, they end up in the terminal where they are amazed to discover that they can actually sleep on benches, protected from the elements, like ordinary travellers. They stay for a while and then move on, like everyone else. When gypsies, truckers, or small groups of tourists set up temporary camps next to service-stations, they transgress the rules meant to ensure the obligatory movement of the highway, and in so doing extend its strict functions to new improvised practices. Like J.G. Ballard's characters in *Crash* and *Concrete Island* who express their sexual phantasms and obsessions through car parks, hospitals, highway interchanges, and airport terminals, like Nabokov's "Humbert" and his nymphet, in the last chapter of *Lolita*, who drive around 1950s America from motel to motel, or like Julio Cortazar who spends a whole month exploring the Paris-Marseilles *autoroute du soleil*, the transient inhabitants of non-places sometimes undertake marginal and unexpected uses of non-places, and offer evidence of possible strategies of subversion. They raise the fact that the cognitive assurances planned by the experts attempting to control flows and the cognitive assurances for those using generic spaces collide and conflict in many instances, and that this collision becomes a key to the transition between space and place. They show that standardization and control are never complete, and never foreclose upon the potential for transgression which they attempt to mitigate against.

#### Conclusion

If the hypothesis of a global space of flows, cutting across borders and tying cities and countries together, seems to be widely accepted today, it still says very little about how its logic affects our ordinary experience of urban space. Does it mean that the physical space of cities is being replaced by the virtual hyperspace of the Internet? Does it mean that the new global space of business elites literally supersedes the concrete space we inhabit? Through this article, I have argued that these narrow and reductive approaches are not the only the way to comprehend the influence of global flows on places. I have tried to show that the virtual and abstract space of economic flows constructs our everyday experiences in very material ways, and that it inevitably ends up producing new categories of places we experience each time we are in transit, driving down a highway, walking through an airport terminal, or strolling in a commercial center. Augé's notion of non-places shows that the space of flows and the space of places are not necessarily two distinct and disconnected entities. If non-places reflect, through their lack of specificity, the abstracted surfaces of the planet, and places suggest locality and particularity, then we need to consider that places increasingly unfold as micro-spaces of flows. Non-places demonstrate how flows and places mutually constitute each other. Within the urban realm, they emerge as the necessary (and inevitable) generic and flow-



ing components of the specificity and uniqueness of the city. Moreover, places reconstruct themselves within non-places through appropriation or transgression. When means of transport and communication and the flows they support serve as a primary purpose of the existence of places, emerging non-places reveal that the systemic logic of flows translates itself into the proxemic scale of everyday life. Thus, both non-places and the logic of flows infiltrate every single interstice of our everyday life.

We have seen that the amount of control exercised over users finds its *raison d'être* in the dimension of risk and uncertainty intrinsically present in the logic of flows. The variable and unstable geometry of the space of flows, which have weakened the relative position of locales within the world economy, requires firms and cities to not only adopt flexible organizational structures but also equip themselves with highly controlled areas. The degrees of control that define non-places evince the fact that the unstable logic of flows infiltrates into the realm of everyday life and shapes public space according to its own recurring standards. It is not so much that global movements of goods and people materialize themselves and suddenly become visible through highways, satellite dishes, or mobile phones, but rather that new categories of space arise, anchoring the domination of the logic of flows to the reality of our built environment. Their recent proliferation attests that our increasingly nomadic life-styles provide us with a new global sense of place which questions both the actual design and the ostensibly stable and local meaning of public space.

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