

situations papers material city 3

Ergin Çavuşoğlu and Professor Tim Cresswell
Wednesday 7 June 2006, Arnolfini, Bristol

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Material City is a programme of interdisciplinary conversations, commissioned projects and creative responses which investigate imagination and the urban environment. It is led by Situations at the University of the West of England, Bristol in association with Arnolfini and the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Bristol.

This conversation between artist and geographer gives an opportunity for an interdisciplinary consideration of place and in turn, of Ergin Çavuşoğlu's works.

To associate Çavuşoğlu's mesmerising video installations merely with the conventions of non-place and to view his work solely through the prism of migration between East and West, would be to miss his engagement with the details that make up specific places in space and time.

Reviewers refer consistently to the poetic and lyrical qualities of his work and to his ability to transcend the documentary in favour of something less tangible, less illustrative. Çavuşoğlu's compositional approach suggests the artist is not interested in *replicating* the experience of the everyday, either as Michel de Certeau has discussed, from the totalising viewpoint of above, nor from the "oblivion" of the street.

Rather, he is intrigued by the representation and remaking of place as understood by Professor Tim Cresswell as, "an event marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence...in a constant sense of becoming through practice and practical knowledge". To think about how and what these video installations signify about place, we need to begin by considering what we understand by the term 'place' itself.

Ergin Çavuşoğlu

Most of my works engage with the city and the urban environment. They are intended to be 'elicit and poetic representations' exposing the boundaries of urban life that lie between the private and the public domains. I often shoot in liminal spaces of cities and urban environments from a varied range, cities of the orient and the occident, airports, waterways, marketplaces. These are also places of mobility, where ships, currencies, people, and time passes in disengagement with their geographical coordinates. Many of the videos are filmed at night, when spaces become liminal and are redefined creating a sense of dislocation.

I am particularly interested in reflecting in my works elements of Henri Lefevbre's theories of the producibility of the street environment, and also in what he calls 'attempts of analysis of the rhythms of cities'. My work also seeks to pose questions about the artistic image and its capacity to examine socio-cultural landscapes and human geographies, and their visual and sonic rhythm analysis in relation to the spaces they inhabit.

The narrative structure of some of the works consists of loose associations of story, juxtapositions of film footage and sound. They are concerned with the domains, form, and visual language of contemporary film and video art. My latest work explores the possibilities of moving beyond the single screen narrative structure into presentation as multiple screen non-linear narrative, which according to the filmmaker Andrey Tarkovsky means that, "...the laws of perception [will] be broken" (Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 1986). He also adds that in his opinion it is a formula for chaos.

Simultaneously creating architectural environments with my installations, I am exploring how the formal structure of multiple screen video and sound installations are set to evoke the sense of place in the form of poeticised works of art, located within the often cold and dark environment of the gallery space. The installations themselves thus become places of mobile transitions.

I often use visual and sonic references to older forms of art making. Sometimes this is a score from a classical piece of music, or an image of classical painting appearing on the screen momentarily. This serves two main purposes in my work; one is to show the continuity of the process and the links to classical art forms, the other is that it alters the sense of the place by marking it with snippets of history and rendering it less of our time, or dated.

Point of Departure

Point of Departure is a six-screen video installation commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella and NGCA in Sunderland. It was filmed at two airports, Stansted in the UK and Trabzon, Turkey.

The work explores issues of transnational migration, surveillance, mobility and translation in a broader sense, through the journeys of two characters. The piece differentiates the experience of transit and travel at portal hubs such as the two airports, which I referred to as "the end points of the European idea", or the contingent borders, between old and new Europe. In its narrative structure the piece explores the strains between travel, work, study, family ties and other tangible migration activities, and the dissonant transitions that lead us beyond the return to places of origin, or the reach of ultimate destinations.

Airports and the zones of scrutinised transition within them have been defined and theorised as non-places, a kind of ephemeral structure 'where histories are not relevant' as Tim Cresswell has explained in his book *Place: a Short Introduction*, referring to Mark Augé's definition of non-place. (Cresswell, 2004).

Of particular interest to me were the ways we define invisible border zones within an environment, which channels the strictest identity formation such as customs and immigration. I was interested to see how these surveillance places of gates, check-in and x-Ray scanning, and the waiting zones within the airports, lounges, cafes, bookshops etc. form and evoke notions of temporal places. I wanted to find ways to translate these spaces into poeticised images from everyday urban environment of an airport, and its 'spatiality'.

The work unfolds into complex architectural structure and uses directional sound projection, which allows the viewer not only to navigate and observe, but also to experience the space in the form of a place. The space becomes a place. The main scenes in the film were scripted and acted by professional actors, but nevertheless in a manner that can accommodate documentary footage.

Adrift

Adrift is set panoramically in pairs across four screens. The video installation intertwines footage I shot across Europe and North America and explores the notion of 'journey' in geographical, historical and cultural perspectives. It addresses issues about mobility in general, and similarly to *Point of Departure* contrasts ideas about 'marked places', and the so-called 'non-places'. The edit cuts between images of cities, sea and landscapes, and some of the main locations it reveals are associated with America's colonial trade.

Most of the footage is shot in Rhode Island, New England, in places such as Ocean Drive in Newport, famed for the mansions built by the early American industrialists. There is a combination of architectural styles from French chateaus to little Versailles palaces. The ambition was to show wealth.

Adrift features non-acting characters drifting into journeys with no apparent destination. However the manner that they appear on the screen is as if they are embarking on parallel journeys. A woman is shown repairing a large boat, preparing to embark upon a voyage. Another person is cleaning the façade of Carnegie Hall, epitomising American cultural life, preparing it for others to take a cultural 'journey'. A third silhouetted individual gazes out of a train window, beginning a journey out of New York from Penn Station. Another element is the images of models relating to modes of transport. One of the screens shows a life-size model boat made of fibreglass, commissioned by the Walt Disney Company, which I discovered, deserted again in Rhode Island, and another screen juxtaposes views of a model of Antwerp's grand central station.

These model structures appear as symbols of mobility between places and of cultural and

economical exchange. The score is from Bach G Minor composed as a 14-second-long piece.

Tahtakale

Tahtakale is a multi-screen video installation about an informal, but significant, currency market set within the 16th Century Grand Bazaar in Istanbul. It consists of four screens, three of them show film footage, and the fourth one is of scrolling text. The name *Tahtakale* is of Turkish origin and means *Wooden Fortress*. This is the name of the location where it's been filmed. Tahtakale and the Grand Bazaar are very close to the historic Istanbul of Hagia Sofia, The Blue Mosque and the Topkapi Palace. Two of the screens show the daily activities of market traders, dealing in currency and gold. The third one shows the so called Hamals, people who carry goods on their backs to the shops up into the market, pretty much as it's been done for hundreds of years. The traders run deals of shady underground nature, but nevertheless in the midst of the market crowds.

Since they have developed their own sign and verbal language, their activities remain inconspicuous to the general public. They perform very private acts in a public space, an alleyway, and on another level the space they occupy becomes a temporal domesticated environment. The volume of their trade often affects the value of the local currency on a global scale simply by deficit or surplus of currency and gold.

Another important element of the piece is my interest in the producibility of the street environment, which has its own rhythm and a form of creativity attached to it. It specifically points to the rhythm of its geography; through the ways people interact among themselves and their environment. It is a form of theatricality, which I like to explore in my work. The fourth screen with the scrolling text randomly depicts phrases from their conversations. The soundtrack is an old Byzantine verse.

Poised in The Infinite Ocean

This work is a three-screen video and sound installation. The images are complemented by a narration by the American writer William Langewiesche from his book *The Outlaw Sea, a World of Freedom, Chaos, and Crime*, which takes place in the Bay of Biscay, where *Poised*

in the Infinite Ocean was shot. This was totally coincidental since I found the text after the edit of the work was completed.

The images and the narrative portray a story of a maritime disaster, an aging cargo ship caught in a thunderstorm, through overlapping symbolic images of sea, house and a city under storm. In the work, the image of the ship is substituted in a literal sense by the chateau. The chateau is on the coast of Bidart, on the outskirts of Biarritz in France, which is also where the ship in the narrative is caught in the storm.

In this case the environment, or 'mobile space' can be identified with Foucault's ideas about heterotopian spaces, that is "*...a place which was not located anywhere, a heterotopia without geographical coordinates, the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea.*" (Michel Foucault, 1967)

Ironically in the narrative William Langewiesche refers to the ship as 'the iron house', "*They called the superstructure where they lived 'the iron house', because it was made of metal and hammed them in...*" *Poised in the Infinite Ocean* is set to evoke the notion of house/home, which Tim Cresswell refers to what Gaston Bachelard (1994) in *The Poetics of Space*, considers to be the primal space, 'framing our understanding of all the spaces outside'. '*... the house/home is a particularly privileged kind of place that frames the way people go on to think about the wider universe*'. (Tim Cresswell, 2004)

Downward Straits

Downward Straits (2004) is a video installation showing the passage of large vessels, cargo ships, tankers etc. crossing the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul at night. It is four-screen video installation, with four separate audio channels. The footages are filmed from both banks of the strait. The ships barely have any lights and their haunting silhouettes only become visible against the backdrop of city lights on the hills of Istanbul. The four screens are positioned in pairs on a 20 degrees angle creating a walk-through corridor for the viewers. The Bosphorus Strait defines the geographical border between Europe and Asia, East and West.

As they pass through the straits, they seem to be both trespassing through this no-man's land and repossessing space. It is about creating an awareness of borders, or the so-called border dwelling, their crossings and finding the place between the places. The sound, which complements the images, but also acts as a separate layer of the theme, is beamed through the use of directional flat panel loudspeakers, which project to a specific part within the installation.

The Bosphorus is also a passageway for ships carrying dangerous cargoes, contraband and are used for human trafficking. The marine radio conversations, which you can hear while walking through the installation, indicate some of these concerns. They also remind us that behind the dark sinister silhouettes of the ships there is a human presence.

Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1974) wrote, "*As for the commodity in general, ... The stores and warehouses where these things are kept, where they wait, the ships, trains and trucks that transport them -- and hence the routes used -- have also to be taken into account [...] It [also] has to be remembered that these objects constitute relatively determinate networks or chains of exchange within a space. The world of commodities would have no 'reality' without such moorings or points of insertion [in space], or without their existing as an ensemble.*"

I would like to read a passage from Nermin Saybasili's book *Journey in Space*, where she has contextualised some of the issues in this piece. This was written after a long conversation between Nermin and me. '*However because in the viewing of Çavuşoğlu's installation, there is a displacement, a disorientation, this upsets any attempt to make a clear statement geographically. Are we heading from East to West or from West to East? Either choice can be made possible according to our own wishes and prejudices. Are we crossing from the Asian side to the European side or from the European side to the Asian side? We are in fact on neither side of the city; we are in-between space.*

The Bosphorus is the world's geographical and imaginative crossroads; it is what connects Europe and Asia and at the same

time what dissolves them. In their temporal, ghostly materiality, Çavuşoğlu's ships break space-time continuum of the location and erase its geographic specificity. But the dark, two-dimensional images of these ships also recall the current stratified landscape of the borders in Europe, where the water is criss-crossed by tourists, military, traders, smugglers and immigrants who are all holding different status and none of their routes, paths or trajectories intersect.' (Nermin Saybaşılı, 2005)

Professor Tim Cresswell

Airports fascinate me. Perhaps because I still associate them with rare childhood experiences of temporary luxury. Perhaps because they have increasingly become part of a life of fairly regular travel. The world presented to me by Ergin's *Point of Departure* is both familiar and strange. It is a landscape I know but seen in a way I do not entirely recognise. It does not matter much that both of the airports we see are ones I have never been to. The experience of airports, we are told, is supposed to be fairly similar wherever we are. But my routes are different from Ergin's routes – his travel is different from mine. His reflections on a mobile and globalising world are seen through different experiential lenses. The ways in which *Point of Departure* and *Adrift* speak to me revolve around notions of place and mobility that have been central to my academic interests.

We are frequently told by respected academics, novelists, travel writers and, I suspect, increasing numbers of artists, that the world in the early twenty-first century is a more mobile world in which the specificities of place, and the sense of 'rootedness' that implies, are being eroded to a point of no-return.

Technologies of mobility and communication allow us to travel literally and imaginatively in ways which were formally impossible or unlikely. A world where everything had its place is now a world where everything is out of place – or possibly even a world where it is no longer possible to be out of place as the associations we make between people, practices and places become increasingly

contingent. I want to use Ergin's work – and *Point of Departure* in particular – to think about some of the issues that surround place and mobility.

Briefly, I want to consider first the notion of airport spaces as symbols of a mobile world, second the entanglements of mobility and surveillance that are such an important part of *Point of Departure* but also *Adrift*, and finally the ways in which the micro-geographies of the airport are simultaneously forms of international geopolitics.

Airports as symbols

First then the airport as a symbol of a global condition. Many commentators have recently suggested that increasing portions of the earth's surface, particularly in the Western world, have become placeless, anyplace or non-place. For those invested in notions of authenticity, heritage, roots and belonging this transformation has been a source of deep concern. Terms such as *Americanisation*, *Disneyfication*, *McDonaldisation* and *Museumification* have been invented to name different aspects of this transformation. Highways, suburbs, fast food outlets, theme parks and shopping malls have all served as symptoms of a placeless world produced through a voracious appetite for mobility and speed. Another space that has been described as a non-place is the airport – the space at the heart of *Point of Departure*.

Airports, as symbols of a world on the move, have become something of an iconic space for discussions of modernity and post-modernity. As the geographer Mike Crang has recently suggested in order to understand a globalised world of transitory experience we need to understand the points and nodes at which mobilities are produced: "*Of all the spaces of a globalised world*", he writes "*airports may be the most emblematic.*"¹

What, exactly, airports are emblematic of is a matter for debate.

In one reading they are seen as the opposite of authentic, rooted, bounded place – as placeless places or non-places. Non-place is a

¹ Mike Crang, "Between Places: Producing Hubs, Flows, and Networks," *Environment and Planning a* 34 (2002): 571.

term developed by the French anthropologist, Marc Augé to account for what he sees as new ways of being in the world associated with a mobile super-modern world.

The multiplication of what we may call empirical non-places (he writes) is characteristic of the contemporary world. Spaces of circulation (freeways, airways), consumption (department stores, supermarkets), and communication (telephones, faxes, television, cable networks) are taking up more room all over the earth today. They are spaces where people coexist or cohabit without living together.²

Augé's discussion of the "anthropology of super-modernity" starts from the perspective of an air traveler and flits in and out of airports throughout. It asks anthropologists to come to terms with the reality of a mobile world. Other writers are even more enamored of the airport world. Consider the enthusiasm of the architect Hans Iberlings:

*"Airports are to the 1990s what museums were to the postmodern 1980s: the arena where numerous contemporary themes converge and all kinds of interesting developments take place....Mobility, accessibility and infrastructure are seen as fundamental themes of the age, unlimited access to the world as the ideal of the moment."*³

Iberlings describes the airport as "an attractive model for the kind of existence that is nowadays associated with globalization, a world where 'jet lag' is built into everybody's biological clock and time and place have become utterly relative."⁴ This enthusiasm is shared by cultural theorists such as Iain Chambers who sees a place such as the airport lounge as a contemporary symbol of flow, dynamism and mobility. Chambers delights in a post-modern world that finds its ultimate expression in the international airport. "With its shopping malls, restaurants, banks,

*post-offices, phones, bars, video games, television chairs and security guards" he writes, "it is a miniaturised city. As a simulated metropolis it is inhabited by a community of modern nomads: a collective metaphor of cosmopolitan existence where the pleasure of travel is not only to arrive, but also not to be in any particular place."*⁵

This vision of the airport is shared by the feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti who writes:

*"But I do have special affection for the places of transit that go with travelling: stations and airport lounges, trams, shuttle buses, and check-in areas. In between zones where all ties are suspended and time stretched to a sort of continuous present. Oases of non-belonging, spaces of detachment. No-(wo)man's land."*⁶

Much of the fetishisation of speed and mobility comes from male commentators and has more than a touch of "boys and their toys" about it. In this respect Braidotti's "special affection" is unusual. But clearly the airport has become the site *par excellence* of musing about the world of flow.

Typical of the contemporary gloss on the significance of airports is the claim made by architectural critic Deyan Sudjic that airports are the contemporary substitute for the public square - a place where strangers come together and cross paths (as happens in *Points of Departure*). Architectural consultant M. Gordon Brown clearly believes this. "Travel is no longer the special and liberating activity it once was" he writes, "it is becoming normalized as a part of everyday urban life for many people." "Airports", he points out, "have developed into self-contained cities that boast more activity and a greater diversity of people than most American downtowns."⁷

Travel writer Pico Iyer seems to agree with this diagnosis. "Los Angeles International Airport

² Marc Augé, *Non-Places : Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London ; New York: Verso, 1995), 110. This idea of airports as a kind of non-place is now commonplace. The artist Robert Smithson referred to the airport as a "non-site" in "Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site" in Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt, *The Writings of Robert Smithson : Essays with Illustrations* (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

³ Hans Iberlings, *Supermodernism : Architecture in the Age of Globalization* (Rotterdam: NAI, 1998), 78-79.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵ Iain Chambers, *Border Dialogues : Journeys in Postmodernity* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1990), 57-58.

⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects : Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory, Gender and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 18.

⁷ M Brown, "A Flying Leap into the Future," *Metropolis*, no. July/August (1995): 79.

is", he argues, "a self-sufficient community complete with chapel, gym and museum, Airports to him are "the new epicenters and paradigms of our dawning post-national age ... bus terminals in the global village... prototype, in some sense, for our polyglot, multicoloured, user-friendly future."⁸

Mobility, of course, plays a key role in the construction of these new public spaces where they are "merely stages on some great global Circle Line, shuttling variations on a common global theme. Mass travel has made L.A. contiguous to Seoul and adjacent to Sao Paulo, and has made all of them now feel a little like bedroom communities for Tokyo."⁹ Typical of the assumptions made by western writers and academics jetting around the world, Iyer notes that, "we eat and sleep and shower in airports, we pray and weep and kiss there." Who "we" consists of is left to the reader's imagination.

If, on the one hand, there are those who bemoan airports as placeless places, there are clearly others who see them through utopian lenses. If the new airport boosterism is to be believed a space such as Heathrow, Schiphol, Changi or LAX is a kind of trans-national utopian space of flows where nationality has been abolished and class erased – where people are "for the most part, happy."

While it is possible to see how these conclusions might have been arrived at they are also somewhat surprising. They are surprising because they erase other features of the airport experience highlighted by an approach that takes the differences between experiences of mobility seriously. Clearly not all passengers in terminals are mobile in quite the same way. As Mike Crang has argued the image of the airport as global transnational space "may speak to a globe-trotting semiotician, but says little to the family with overtired children delayed by lack of connecting buses in Majorca."¹⁰

Consider the various mobilities that produce and are produced by the airport spaces around the world. The airport lounge is indeed

the space of the privileged business traveller in addition to those who have recently purchased discount tickets on the internet for an Easy Jet flight. There is no system on Earth that quite so explicitly makes the existence of a kinetic hierarchy so clear.

On Virgin Atlantic those who travel in the most luxury are travelling "upper-class". On other airlines such travellers are "connoisseur" or "elite". If you travel "upper class" you can be picked up at home by a limousine. Your mobility will be seamless. On arrival at Heathrow the Virgin upper class traveller can take the fast lane through immigration. In the airport there are lounges for this kinetic elite. Many of the people travelling through airports are familiar with them. Others have never flown before and still find the very idea of flying miraculous. So the airport is the space of the global kinetic elite as well as occasional flyers, budget airline flyers and charter flight package tourists such as the family *en route* to Majorca that Crang reminds us of.

Also making their way through the airport are immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. People who have been forced to smuggle drugs with condoms full of cocaine filling their stomachs. Then there is the workforce of pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, check-in workers, janitors. Major airports support a huge workforce who commute in daily patterns to and from the airport and its suburbs. The already differentiated traveller, the migrant workers and the airport workers are all mobile. Their mobilities are all enabled by the construction of the airport as a node in a network but their mobilities are brimming over with different forms of significance. The general observation that the world is a more mobile place does not do justice to this richness. The suggestion that airports erase class and nationality seem, frankly, bizarre in an instrumental space where you are literally divided into classes and so frequently asked to show your passports as evidence of 'where you come from'. In the airport, the corporeality of mobility – the way the body feels – intersects with categorizations of types – citizen, alien, tourist, business traveller, commuter.

In *Point of Departure* there are a number of ways in which the idea of THE airport is erased. It is set in two airports. Neither of them

⁸ P Iyer, "Where Worlds Collide," *Harper's Magazine*, August 1995, 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Crang, "Between Places: Producing Hubs, Flows, and Networks," 573.

is a major international hub. Stansted and Trabzon, in Turkey are not the kinds of airports that inhabit the pages of contemporary theories of globalization. They are much more mundane, small scale, marginal. They are also quite clearly different places. One way in which airports act as places is as national spaces. The traveller who disembarks in Stansted after embarking in Trabzon (on indeed Paris or New York) will feel different. National identity is marked on passports but also in the sense of place an airport embodies. Signs look slightly different. The mix of people is different. The air smells different. Place identity works in these banal ways in airports. It is quite clear in *Point of Departure* that these two airports are two different places with their own rhythms and practices.

Vision and Movement

Another way in which airports might be put forward as symbols of a new age is through the practice of surveillance. In airports the mobility of the human body is intimately wrapped up with techniques of seeing. It is important that the traveller is constantly seen and equally important that traveller has things to see.

In *Point of Departure* we are constantly reminded of the security aspect of airport inhabitation. Nowhere on earth is more heavily surveyed than airport space. In this sense it is a model or a portent for the wider world of public and, increasingly, private space. In the airport surveillance is combined with software modelling to manage human motion. Elaborate software programmes are used to both design the architecture of airports and predict and manage the movement of passengers once they are built.

Surveillance, simulation and security are mingled into a hybrid space of code, people and physical structures.¹¹ As Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin put it "*Progress from buying a ticket, to moving through an airport, to travel*

on a plane is mediated through code/space – space produced through code."¹² In the airport the construction of material space and the programming of software have become inseparable. The architecture itself is produced using software models, flows in and out of the airport space are modelled, surveillance systems monitor the use of space in great detail. In addition passports have become computer readable and tickets are more often than not e-tickets, for the most part unintelligible to the average passenger.

As you move through the airport you are processed – you move through 'real' space and code space simultaneously.¹³ The use of modelling and surveillance is combined to both model future movement through the airport and monitor existing mobility. Trustworthy mobilities need to be differentiated from untrustworthy ones. Passenger profiling, for instance, uses complicated and increasingly biometric indicators to choose who should be searched when boarding the aircraft. Airport authorities, in the wake of 9/11, are increasingly looking for travellers who should be prevented from travelling. The new American system called CAPPS II (Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System) performs exactly this function. A System such as this, as Michael Curry puts it, "*relies on stories about activities that are proper and ones that are improper, about activities that belong in particular places and activities that do not. Each in the end relies on a simple and unstable story, of the treacherous – or trusted – traveller.*"¹⁴

Modelling mobility has been central to the planning and engineering of airport environments. This has grown ever more sophisticated as computing power has increased. Modelling systems in airport environments have developed from simple generalised models of flow to complicated three-dimensional envisioning of passenger mobility. In the process specific human bodies

¹¹ See Adey, "Secured and Sorted Mobilities: Examples from the Airport.", Peter Adey, "Surveillance at the Airport: Surveilling Mobility/Mobilising Surveillance," *Environment and Planning A* (2004), Michael Curry, "The Profiler's Question and the Treacherous Traveler: Narratives of Belonging in Commercial Aviation.," *Surveillance and Society* 1, no. 4 (2004), Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin, "Flying through Code/Space: The Real Virtuality of Air Travel," *Environment and Planning A* 36 (2004).

¹² Dodge and Kitchin, "Flying through Code/Space: The Real Virtuality of Air Travel," 198.

¹³ For a wider interpretation of this phenomenon see N. J. Thrift and S French, "The Automatic Production of Space," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 27 (2002).

¹⁴ Curry, "The Profiler's Question and the Treacherous Traveler: Narratives of Belonging in Commercial Aviation.," 488.

have been made to disappear and reappear at will.¹⁵

To most people in airport management, passengers become mere PAX. PAX are passengers – generic passengers with no identifying marks. Once you have invented PAX you can then produce models of PAX movements in airport space. PAX are a symptom of a synoptic perspective on space that enacts a transformation of mobile bodies into a legible record which can be analyzed by the panoptic gaze of the architect, planner and engineer. Movement is abstracted and standardized through the removal of the clumsy fleshiness of real bodies. Bodies are thus transformed, to use Jonathan Crary's words "*into a phantom in order to establish a space of reason.*"¹⁶ The meaningful corporeal mobility of people is abstracted into the movement of PAX.

While PAX enact abstract, disembodied movement within flow models other forms of hardware and software rely on the very specificity of particular kinds of bodies in order to police mobility at various points within the airport. The airport enacts a series of thresholds for mobility allowing some (most) people to move on and effectively immobilising others. Passports have to be shown and identities revealed. Codes have to match identities. Suspicious movements are watched and monitored. During a tour of Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam given to me by its chief architect, Jan Bentham, we were stopped on emerging from the baggage handling area. We both had passes (Bentham had arranged one for me) but were nevertheless recognised as unauthorised mobile bodies amongst the machines and luggage. Jan explained our interview and identified himself as the architect. We were allowed to proceed but only after being told that even the building's architect did not have permission to take visitors into the baggage handling underworld. So much for architects as gods. There is nowhere in Schiphol where mobilities are not being monitored.

¹⁵ Adey, "Surveillance at the Airport: Surveilling Mobility/Mobilising Surveillance."

¹⁶ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 41.

Schiphol is more advanced than most airports in that it has introduced a biometric monitoring scheme for frequent passengers willing to submit to it and pay an appropriate fee (about \$100).¹⁷ Starting in 2001 the scheme, called Privium, allows approved travellers to move at speed through immigration by simply submitting to an iris scan. Members not only travel through the airport more quickly they are also allotted guaranteed parking at the closest car park and are provided with dedicated check in services at certain airline check-in desks. The technique of iris scanning is explained on the Privium website:

The technology used in the iris scan is based on the recognition of specific characteristics of the iris. The iris scan is more reliable and faster than other forms of biometric identification, such as fingerprint or hand palm recognition. This is because the iris never changes and irises are rarely damaged or injured. Just a tiny injury to the finger or to the palm of the hand can hamper biometric recognition.¹⁸

There are limits to membership in the scheme. You have to be a member of the European Economic Area (EU plus Iceland, Switzerland and Norway) and over 1.5 metres tall. Images of people using the scheme on the web and in pamphlets available at the airport are all of smartly dressed white people – mostly men. Signing up to this form of voluntary surveillance is seen as a privilege which allows highly mobile business travelers to effectively bypass immigration. These members of the kinetic elite are granted what amounts to a fast lane from home to meeting and back again. The absence of people in the Privium line is very noticeable as you stand in line at passport control.

Biometric schemes for monitoring identities as they pass through mobility thresholds work on the basis of linking a particular unique body (more precisely – a metonymic part of it such as iris or a fingerprint) to an identity. So while CCTV monitors mobility everywhere through the logic of the gaze, biometrics works by tracking movement by logging identities at

¹⁷ A similar program (INSPASS) based on a scan of the hand is in operation in the United States with over 50,000 participants.

¹⁸

<http://www.schiphol.nl/schiphol/privium/privium_home.jsp> accessed 14/06/04.

particular points or thresholds. What is at stake, at these thresholds, is the ability of particular bodies to move in speed and comfort. As Gillian Fuller has put it “[b]iometrics is concerned with keeping people in or out: of buildings; of websites; of countries. It is a method of controlling the chaos of movement, of protecting capital from contagion – the harmful touch of an unauthorized ingress – and streamlining the flow for those with the right password.”¹⁹ As acceptable passengers are allowed to enact their mobility unmolested so human security officials are freed up to monitor life in the slow lane of non-Privium members. The speed of some is logically related to the slowness of others.

Biometric schemes like Privium are implicated in the construction of various forms of citizenship as particular types of passenger are separated out from others. As the scheme’s members are more than likely to be European business travelers they fall neatly into established notions of what constitutes a citizen in Europe –bodies which are easily understood within liberal framings of mobility in a free-trade zone. The excluded are those who to a greater or lesser degree do not match such a framing. As Martha Rosler has argued “information manipulation – which includes the construction and dissemination of social narratives as well as covert surveillance and other forms of data gathering and management – has come into focus as the most visible and consistent form of social control. This impulse to control is part and parcel of the air transport system.”²⁰

Representation, ideology and practice cohere around a scheme such as Privium and the mobilities it manages. Behind the seemingly neutral technology lie social narratives – ideologies – of mobility. These ideologies course through the mundane practices of passenger mobilities as they are practiced on a day to day basis in Schiphol. They connect the patterns of the Iris to notions of trans-national citizenship.

¹⁹ Gillian Fuller, "Perfect Match: Biometrics and Body Patterning in a Networked World," *Fibreculture Journal* 1 (2004).

http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue1/issue1_fuller.html.

²⁰ Martha Rosler, *Martha Rosler : In the Place of the Public : Observations of a Frequent Flyer* (New York, N.Y.: Cantz, 1998), 32.

Looking

So much for being seen but what about seeing? Airports are also spaces where we are compelled to constantly look. Airports are worlds full of screens and signs. These screens and signs enact a complicated balancing act of making us move and compelling us to stop and linger. The writings of Michel Foucault have encouraged many of us to consider the way the idea of being watched and immobilise and instil discipline. But spectatorship, as Jonathan Crary has pointed out, can make us equally docile. The model for this, of course, is the television viewer. In airports passengers are constantly enrolled into positions of looking. At windows, in shops and in front of the information display monitors that tell us where our plane is. As Crary has put it, “Spectacle is not primarily concerned with looking at images but rather with the construction of conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous. In this way attention becomes key to the operation of non-coercive forms of power.”²¹ Looking, therefore, immobilizes and positions passengers every bit as much as being seen.²²

Point of Departure is full of screens. Most obviously perhaps it is made of screens. The act of engaging with this installation is not unlike engaging with airport space itself. As we observe we are momentarily immobilised. Meanwhile we are encouraged to observe in different ways. We see a man looking at a screen which displays the x-rayed contents of baggage. On the floor below us we see the baggage our selves and are encouraged to figure out what might be in the bags as they pass through the machine. At another time we see the man looking at the screen from above as though we are in some security space somewhere looking at a screen which shows the x-ray operator who himself is looking at a screen. This view from above is repeated throughout the narrative. We see the post-graduate protagonist of the piece enjoying a cup of coffee from more or less eye level as

²¹ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the observer : on vision and modernity in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.), 112

²² For an account of this see Peter Adey “May I have your attention?” Airport Geographies of spectatorship, position and (im)mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (Forthcoming)

though we are another passenger also enjoying a coffee for a snack. But we also see him, at the same table, with the same coffee, from above – peeking into his private moment. At other times we see the main protagonist staring upwards while talking to a passing stranger. Presumably he is looking at the constantly changing departures screen that occasionally also appears as one of the installation screens as though we too could choose a flight to Istanbul or Ankara. This representation of surveillance occurs in other work. In *Adrift* we watch people hanging out on street corners from some point above their heads. The work puts us in the position of authority – the all knowing view from nowhere that decides which activities, which mobilities, as acceptable and which are threatening.

The Body and International Geopolitics

The third theme I want to tease out of *Point of Departure* is the way that airports link individual bodies with international geopolitics. *Point of Departure* is not a straightforward piece of political art but there is a constant political undertone to it. The airports are on the margins of an extended idea of Europe. Trabzon looks out to the old Soviet Union, Stansted is on an Atlantic margin in a nation undecided on its European identity. One is in a place that wants to be in the European Union but isn't while the other is a place that is in the European Union but is unsure whether it wants to be.

There is also the issue of immigration and xenophobia that provides an uneasy undercurrent to the arrival and imminent departure of a man from Turkey in Stansted as he heads west. Simultaneously a white British female reporter heads east reminding me of a long history of the orientalist fascination with Eastern culture. Just as these two airports are not the same, neither are these two travellers. Airports are places where wider identities are embodied and reiteratively produced everyday through practices of travel.

The European Union is clearly aware of the power of the mundane in the production of European Identity. It is in places like Stansted or Trabzon where such an identity will be produced rather than in Strasbourg or Brussels. This has been made quite explicit in European Union documentation. The recent European Convention documents, for

instance, confirmed the long-established idea that the right to mobility is perhaps the most significant fundamental right in Europe. European Commission documentation is quite clear about the significance of this right to mobility.

The freedom to travel or to go about one's business throughout Europe as in one's own country is for the citizen the most potent symbol of the existence of the European Union.²³

Barriers to the free movement of people within the European Union have tumbled over the past 25 years. Queues of vehicles at borders between EU countries are a thing of the past. Citizens of the Union can now travel or go about their business throughout Europe almost as if it were one country.²⁴

The promotion of mobility as a way of being a free European citizen extends well beyond formal rights. A pamphlet on European citizenship produced by the European Commission makes this clear: *"Everyone nowadays recognizes the sky-blue banner with 12 gold stars symbolizing European unification, which we see more and more often flying alongside national flags in front of public buildings. Is there anyone who can fail to be moved on hearing the Ode to Joy from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony ...? What Community national does not enjoy following the 'European Community' sign in airport arrival halls, and passing through simply by showing the uniform passport adopted in 1985?"*²⁵

The pamphlet goes on to list the different technologies and practices of mobility that will ensure a feeling of European identity through constant reiterative use. These include common driving licenses, agreements of healthcare, a frontier free mobile phone transmission zone, a lack of customs checks, the EU channel at airports and border crossings without passports. There is a clear sense here that it is the practice of mobility

²³ European Commission, *Freedom of Movement, Europe on the Move* (Brussels: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1994), 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 1.

²⁵ Pascal Fontaine, *A Citizen's Europe, Europe on the Move* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1993), 7-8.

that will produce a feeling of freedom, citizenship and European identity – that citizenship will be produced through the practice of freedom of/as mobility.

The connection between bodies waiting in line and definitions what it is to be European was brought home to me on a recent visit to Bologna. On arrival I was rushed through immigration without so much as a glance at my passport. A plane from Albania had arrived at the same time and the line of people at immigration was more or less stationary. My traveling companions were American citizens and therefore had to stand in line with the Albanians until a policeman noticed their passports and moved them through the “European” line. Here was the politics of mobility and immobility – the geopolitics of mobility at a micro scale. Americans become “European” while Albanians quite clearly do not. Once immigration has been negotiated there is customs. Who gets stopped and why? What kinds of immobility are imposed on those subjected to body cavity searches? Many people every year are sent on the next plane “home”. The production of a border free Europe and the right to mobility that implies is, as Derrida has reminded us, dependent on the multiplication of border at places like Stansted and Trabzon – borders which facilitate the easy passage of the European citizen figure at the same time as they prevent the harmful ingress of the outsiders – the non-citizens.

So these three themes – airports as symbols of a placeless world, vision and security and the collapsing of scales – all circulate both within airports and in *Point of Departure*.

Point of Departure reminds me that airports are different – contextual as much as they are ‘generalisable’. It reminds me that mobilities are also contextual and political. Mobility is not just a central feature of modern or super-modern life but is itself differentiated in political ways. Finally it reminds me that bodies are differentially connected to identities as they pass through airport space – sometimes smoothly and sometimes haltingly and sometimes not at all. Here place, mobility and identity are entangled in complicated ways on a daily basis.

Conversation

Tim Cresswell: As I came to your work with these preconceptions, I wondered to what extent they were part of your intention in making the work?

Ergin Çavuşoğlu: Of course, some of these ideas are part of the process, but sometimes the contextualization comes afterwards. As I mentioned, this work (*Point of Departure*) was in production for such a long time. This project is also based on everyday encounters and I revisited that idea later. The starting point for *Point of Departure* was the X-Ray image and how it becomes translated. I filmed something at Charles De Gaulle airport in 1998, when it was possible to film in such locations, and I found the whole environment very poetic, especially in relation to the X-Ray image. But after September 11th, the surveyed environment became even more surveyed. But this moment in 1998, was the point at which I was interested in saying something about this environment and how I could say it – so the story began. I needed some kind of narrative. I scripted the piece and wrote it as a non-linear narrative piece.

TC: One of the most surprising things about this piece is the sound. It is very highly engineered through the different spaces, so that the sounds lead you through the installation. One of things that disturbed me (in a good way) was the way in which you would see things from different angles, so you saw a man drinking his coffee from above and from the side and most of the time there were not in sync.

EC: Many of the scenes were filmed from multiple viewpoints, from multiple angles and none of the scenes were repeated. During the editing process (which took quite a long time as we were editing six screens), I realized that I could sync the action but also make a series of scenes out of sync in some ways to disrupt the ways in which the airport was regimented and to reflect the way in which humans could disrupt the order.

TC: People do write about airports as places where time gets scrambled, partly because every traveler has their own trajectory and they enter a space which is instrumental in

terms of them catching a plane at a particular time – it gave me a sense of that temporality is individual in an airport.

EC: It was a conscious decision to break the time/space ratio (for instance by changing the clothes of one of the characters or by one of the characters appearing in different places at the same time).

TC: The other thing that intrigued me (after I had spent quite some time in the installation) was the way in which you structure the space of the viewer. So in one of the 'rooms' of the installation, below your feet is the image of the luggage being x-rayed and around you are images of machinery, so that this was a space in which 'mobility' was coming through and it had a constant sense of abstracted mobility. And then as I moved to the other space, I encountered the story of the young post-graduate student in art history encountering a woman leaving Stansted. These are trajectories that are very personal – we encounter them meeting in a particular instance – so you get this abstract motion and the personalized trajectories of individuals. I thought that was sensational. I don't know how else you might have a piece of art that would allow for both of those to run through it.

EC: In relation to your book, thinking of Doreen Massey's progressive sense of place, do you think an airport is an example of a progressive sense of place?

TC: I don't imagine that Massey is talking about an airport, as she is referring specifically to a lived sense of place, for example Kilburn High Road. An airport is different because it is not inhabited, unless by homeless people. It is a space which people come in and out of. It is the case that some writers have treated airports as threatening in relation to more bounded, inhabited places.

EC: So when you were undertaking research at Schiphol Airport, were you looking specifically at the architecture or at the people and how they interact with that architecture?

TC: I came and went from the airport over about three weeks, talking to people moving through the airport, taxi drivers, workers and the architect. The architect and sign designers helped me to think about how mobility had

been planned for the airport and then I began thinking about airports as places where mobilities can occur in unexpected ways. Elizabeth Grosz suggested that space was a possibility of a different inhabitation.

EC: In your book, you also discuss people who are in and out of place.

TC: Yes, this is something that has interested me for a long time. I wonder in an airport space how that works. You are expecting to see all kinds of things, so it's harder to be out of place. Homeless people in Schiphol don't look too different from anyone else, for example it is not unusual in an airport to see someone sleeping on the floor, or unloading their bags, or mubbling to themselves. Their out of place, in that they are not supposed to be there, but they don't 'look' out of place.

EC: There is the distinction between land-site and air-site in the airports too. It took months and months to get a permission to go on 'airsite' via passport control to film. There are a variety of things that triggered my interest in Trabzon from its correspondence to the sea and the fact it figures in Jason and the Argonauts myth.

Audience 1: If you consider *Adrift* and *Point of Departure*, one of the things I'm interested in is that these are not simulations of an airport or street experience. You complicate a cinematic narrative structure by the fracturing of time and space and literally the space of the installation. How do you think the more recent work relates to the earlier work in this respect?

EC: I mentioned earlier that some cinematographers discuss these multi-layering techniques. I believe that this is how we perceive the chaos of the world. I am not simulating the airport environment but rather creating a new one in the gallery: a place within a space. It allows me to play with time, mobility and the sonic experience.

Audience 1: The orchestration becomes very important in shifting that sense of everyday experience.

EC: I should emphasise that the process is not to film the work, and then decide to split it into different parts. Rather it is intended to be broken apart from the beginning. I first create

the architectural environment of the installation, and then I start thinking about content and how they interrelate. It is like a building process rather than breaking a single piece into different parts.

Audience 1: So is your selection of places, very particular?

EC: In the case of *Point of Departure*, I worked on story-boards, and then in the edit I assessed the material more painterly.

Audience 1: And Tim how does that process relate to your research process in the field in Schipol for example?

TC: As an academic, it was my first ethnographic experience. So I guess initially I was quite naïve. So I chose different areas of the airport in which to sit and engage. In this respect, it was similar to Ergin's process. I became fascinated by the signage. The aesthetics of mobility in that respect are filtering out around the world. The experience of mobility is becoming homogenised.

Audience 2: Considering your mention of Augé's theory of 'non-place', how does this relate to the iconic significance of airports and place identity?

TC: I don't think Augé is referring to specific airports, more often motorway service stations, but mostly they are replicable, on the outskirts of some-where. Non-places don't go through some-where they go past it. Increasingly places of transit are iconic places.

Audience 1: Also the other thing you point out in your book Tim, is that airports are also destinations, places of work for guards and cleaners, not places of transit for people who work there eight to ten hours a day.

Audience 3: I was pleased to hear your comments Ergin, because it confirmed for me that this work is not about airports but about people and their relation to each other. In this body of work, there are pieces that are much more specifically about place than human interaction. I think by seeing the body of work as a whole, you can begin to trace the experimentation that Ergin is effecting.

EC: It is about how we occupy these places rather than the places themselves.

TC: There is a long tradition in geography about the use of places by people, how a sense of place emerges through interaction between people. If you sit in an airport day-in, day-out you become aware of the rhythmic, diurnal ways in which they operate.

Audience 4: I was interested in the fact that everything that you show is familiar and that you did not show the 'ghost', backstage area of the airport.

EC: Well, the backstage area is a different piece I think. I have experienced it. We had an 11-strong film crew and five more people to chaperone us, who in turn were being watched by surveillance. It's interesting that you use the term 'back-stage', as I was also intrigued by how theatrical the space of the airport is. Without being conscious of it, you start acting within the space.

TC: The architect of Schipol described in fascinating detail the ways in which the airport facilitates mobility from the signage to the marble of the floor. Going back to the question from the floor, to talk of backstage, upstairs Schipol Airport is a international space of mobility characterised by people from all over the world; downstairs in the baggage hold, the airport is being serviced by an almost entirely black workforce monitored by a white security service, who travel into Schipol from the near-by housing development.

EC: The reason I chose Trabzon is precisely that sense that something is about to go awry, something is not quite right with the world and I hope that comes through in the work.

Information

Ergin Çavuşoğlu

Ergin Çavuşoğlu was born in Bulgaria, and studied fine arts in Sofia in the early 1980s. He consequently received a BA in Mural Painting from University of Marmara, Istanbul, and an MA from Goldsmiths College, London. His recent shows include one-person exhibitions at John Hansard Gallery, Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art, Haunch of Venison, and Dundee Contemporary Arts. He represented Turkey at the 50th Venice Biennale 2003 and participated in the 8th Istanbul Biennial and the 3rd Berlin Biennale. His work was included in Becks Futures 2004 and the British Art Show 6. He currently lives and works in London.

Tim Cresswell

Professor Tim Cresswell is Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth (soon to be University of London Professor of Human Geography at Royal Holloway from July 1st). His work focuses on the role of geography in the constitution of social and cultural life - particularly through sustained engagement with the ideas of 'place' and 'mobility'. His most recent work considers the role of mobility in modern Western Society as a vector for ideologies, values and practices. At scales ranging from the individual body (in the work place of the dance hall) to the globe (in the international airport). He is keen to show how mobilities are both central to our ideas of what it is to live in the modern West and yet are simultaneously perceived as threatening. Mobility is not simply a generic thing, he suggests, but is radically contextual.

Recommended reading

Ergin Çavuşoğlu

Places of Departure, artist's monograph with essays by Steven Bode, Chris Darke, Claire Doherty and Simon Harvey. London: Film and Video Umbrella and Haunch of Venison, 2006
British Art Show 6, DVD, an interview. London: Hayward Gallery & BALTIC, 2005
British Art Show 6. London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2005
Whitstable Biennale 2004, essay by Steven Bode. London and Canterbury: Arts Council, Canterbury City Council, 2004
3rd berlin biennial for contemporary art, text by Simon Harvey. Berlin: berlin biennale fur zeitgenossische kunst e.V., 2004
8th International Istanbul Biennial, text by Sally O'Reilly. Istanbul: Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2003

Tim Cresswell

Place: A Short Introduction. Oxford, Blackwell, 2004
Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003
Engaging Film: Geographies of Mobility and Identity. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002
The Tramp in America. London: Reaktion Books, 2001

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