Memory of metropolis / remembering and forgetting in metropolis

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Abstract:
The word 'Metropolis' is a shorter version of the word 'meterpolis', itself derived from the Greek word 'meter' (mother) and polis (city, town). It is identified as the 'center city' which is more developed than other cities in terms of culture and economy (1). Hence, the metropolis is a depiction of hybridity and multi-layering; and while it is related to the city, it is not solely derived from the space. Even though the concept of a metropolis carries spatial references related with urban density, its real quality is super-spatial, in the sense that as Gideon describes as the cities as "social constructs".

The most particular characteristic of a network society makes itself visible through changes in space and time. All relationships, regardless of time and place, can be facilitated through networks. They are also capable of connecting the whole city as a single skein. Each relationship has its own channels of interactions and these channels do not intersect even though they sometimes overlap. As a result, this fragmental network structure creates a collage of relationships within the city. This collage, relating to the previous orders and networks and conducting different relationships with them, causes a dynamic palimpsest structure.

The metropolis is considered a palimpsest because they carry the qualities of a world city. In other words, while metropolises carry the historic marks of the geography that they are located in social and spatial manners, they transform rather quickly within the multi directional flow fed by the whole world. Even though this flow continues to create city and metropolis images that are similar to each other, each metropolis still continues to be itself due to this unique palimpsest and its layers.

The integration of speed with the city could be considered as an important aspect distinguishing life and social from the pre-modern period. The transforming impact of speed and mechanical movement on social life leads to an analysis of the metropolises within the context of memory.

The metropolis is a post-modern concept one realized through spatio-temporal transformations of the post-industrial era. In a metropolis, man's interaction with the world he lives in seems to be quite different from other cities. Hence, understanding the disconnection of man from the space of the metropolis generated modernity is important for deciphering the mentality and memory of the life in the metropolis.

As a result, this article focuses on how an individual, who is detached from space, performs the acts of remembering and forgetting within the metropolitan life. The text also hopes to shed light on the topography of a metropolis which inclines towards forgetting and ephemerality rather than stability and permanency. From this perspective, the article will suggest new ways of analyzing Istanbul in the context of memory.

Keywords: *Metropolis, memory, remembrance, forgetting, palimpsest*

I.

> *If you choose to believe me, good. Now I will tell how Octavia, the spider web city, is made. There is a precipice between two steep mountains: the city is over the void, bound to the two crests with ropes and chains and catwalks. You walk on the little wooden ties, careful not to set your foot in the open spaces, or you cling to the hempen strands. Below there is nothing for hundreds and hundreds of feet: a few clouds glide past; farther down you can glimpse the chasm's bed. This is the foundation of the city: a net which serves as passage and as support. All the rest, instead of rising up, is hung below: rope-ladders, hammocks, houses made like sacks, clothes-hangers, terraces like gondolas, skins of water, gas jets, spits, baskets on strings, dumb-waiters, showers, trapezes and rings for children's games, cable-cars, chandeliers, pots with trailing plants. Suspended over the abyss, the life of Octavia's inhabitants is less uncertain than in other cities. They know the net will last only so long.*
> *Calvino, 1972, Invisible Cities, pp. 19.*

It is the liminal status of the metropolis, not being able to live with or without it, that seems to be the reason for an endless literary production. Like Calvino's city which has developed without even touching the "place", the metropolis intertwined of nets and networks that stay side by side, on top of each other without any context. And this "non-placed" geography gets being more cosmopolitan each day, creating a character that was called by Simmel *(1997)*, as *blasé* by Sennett (1999), as narcissist and by Jameson (1983) as schizophrenic.

The word 'Metropolis' is a shorter version of the word 'meterpolis' which is derived from the Greek word 'meter' (mother) and polis (city, town). It is identified as the 'centre city' which is more developed than other cities in terms of culture and economy (1). Hence, the metropolis is a depiction of hybridity and multi-layering; and while it is related to the city, it is not solely reducible to that space. This stratified state of the metropolis, while referencing to a historical background, refers more often than not to the multi-directional interaction of today's network. Even though the concept of a metropolis carries spatial references related with urban density, its real quality is super-spatial, what Gideon describes as the cities as "social constructs".

Kıray (1999) states that metropolitization is specific to the 20th century. The metropolis first appeared in United States at the beginning of the century, when the interaction among communication, transportation, professionalization, and organization faced severe transformations. It appeared as an economic, social and governmental urban core at the center as a result of the increasing distance between the residential and office zones and the emergence of sub-urban precincts on the periphery (Yırtıcı, 2005).

Similar to Calvino's (1972) depiction of the city of Ottavia, which was composed of networks, Castells (1996) defined the cities as an area composed of interaction networks. According to Castells (2008), networks became the dominant way of social organization in the information society (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 2007, pp. 241).

The most particular characteristic of a network society is the changing concepts of time and space. There is timeless time and flow of space in the network society (Castells, 2008: 13). With these words Castells refers to the relativity of the concept of time, and explains how the place is detached from its geographical boundaries and transcends through technology (Göker and Doğan, 2010).

In Castells' network society, all relationships were conducted through these networks independent of space and time. But, these networks do not connect the city as a whole. Each relationship has a different channel of interaction, and even these channels pass through each other sometimes they do not intersect with each other. So, this accumulating sets of fragmented of individual networks creates a collage of relationships in the city. This collage, continuously changing through past orders and relations, and each time relating differently with those, creates a dynamic palimpsest structure.

The metropolis is considered a palimpsest because they it carries the qualities of a world city. In other words, while metropolises carry the historic marks of the physical and social geography in which they are located they transform rather quickly within the multi directional flow fed by the whole world. Even though this flow continues to create city and metropolis images that are much similar to each other, each metropolis continues to be itself due to this unique palimpsest and its layers.

Auge's (1995) quotations from Perec (1974, 1997) could be used to define any metropolis: "A tangled and incomplete thing, a mixture of order and anarchy, a huge micro cosmos in which all human artifacts are accumulated" (Tanyeli, 2004).

This "huge anarchic accumulation" that Perec (1974) is talking about is also crucial for this article which deals with remembering and forgetting.

These layers accumulated in an unidentifiable dis-order, make many of the tangible and intangible parts of the city invisible (Figure 1, 2).

One of the most prominent sociologists of the 20th century, Louis Wirth (1938), in his article "Urbanism as a Way of Life" defines the cities as the place of difference. But at the same time, he considers the metropolis as the melting pot of different cultures, races, religions where hybridity blossoms. Because, in the metropolis, it is not possible to live these differences profoundly. In other words, with their heterogeneous socialites and beyond physical borders, metropolises could be considered not as a city on the world but as several worlds in one city.

According to Simmel (1997), metropolises are attractive due to the large freedom zone derived from their variety and multi-layerness. The metropolis is so large and its borders are so undefined that someone who begins his

journey as an individual becomes a solitary figure. According to Simmel, the quantity and the quick transformation of the stimuli within a metropolis decreases the spiritual depth of an individual and leads to a shallow character. In the city of decisions, as one has to decide fast, act fast, and has to live within minutes; he/she act with his/her brain not with his/her heart. This creates a new character specific to the metropolis: "blasé".

Even though they were criticized for their sharp distinctions between traditional and modern, rural and urban Sennett (1999), Wirth (1938), and Simmel (1997) initiated an important discussion in the field, as they stated that it is not sufficient to explain a city or a metropolis only through its physical morphologies. The metropolis and the social life produced by it became the topic of numerous researches during the 21st century and were seen as a mental problematic rather than formal (2).
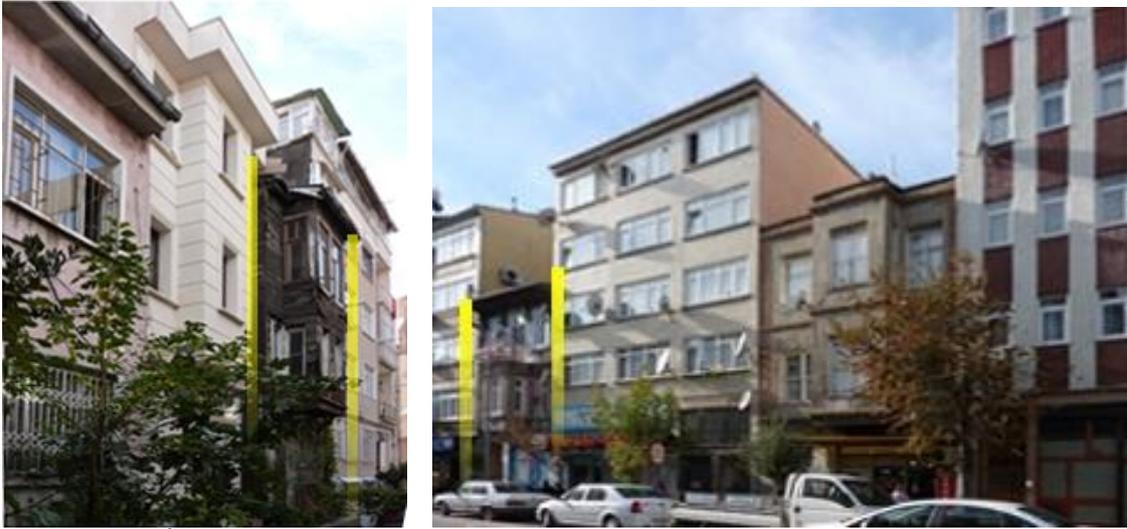

Figure 1, 2. *İstanbul, Samatya, 2012, relation of visible and invisible (Photographed by Çalak, I.E., 2012).*

II.

As the cities grow inwards due to spatial and cultural stratification of the population, and with the integration of accelerating communication and transformation networks to this system, cities become metropolises. The integration of speed with the city could be considered as an important aspect distinguishing life and social from the pre-modern period. The transforming impact of speed and mechanical movement on social life leads to an analysis of the metropolises within the context memory.

Le Corbusier (1924) describes the role of the transportation facilities in the formation of the cities and offers an analogy between the transportation nodes and doors of the cities. In the modern city, transportation hubs are gathered in the city center and also disseminates from there. Additionally, with the increasing speed of the city life since 1920s, the centers, rather than being physical cores defined by transportation connections, are defined with more and more complex global information, economy, and communication networks. This fact not only changed the way the body and the world outside were perceived, but also how that world was remembered.

During the 19th century, walking was replaced with mechanical movement; this adds a mobile dimension to the perception of the city. Suddenly, the unstable individual was able to observe the world within a moving vehicle. While railways created the first examples of this panoramic perception, it was the highway that created its modern form. Space is observed in its reduced form in the automobile, as the purpose is not to see the city but to gain freedom of mobility. Volumes leave their place to surfaces and the whole view transforms into visual signs found in ready-made maps (Connerton, 2009). Virilio (2003) defines this as "the aesthetics of disappearance".

The concept of mobility facilitated the transformation of the city in various aspects. This very motion detaches the mobile individual from his context. This detachment necessitates a reorganization of subject's state of being. These lives that took place on versatile and slippery grounds, eventually transform individual's relation to space and to the city on a larger scale. In 1958 Yona Friedman designed settlements named "spatial cities". These designs organized on regular grids, were imaginary urban settlements superimposed on top of the existing cities. According to his designs, people were able to relocate their residences freely, and could move the section of the city that belonged to them. As a result, none of these pieces belonged to a single place (Özbey, 2007), (Figure 3, 4).
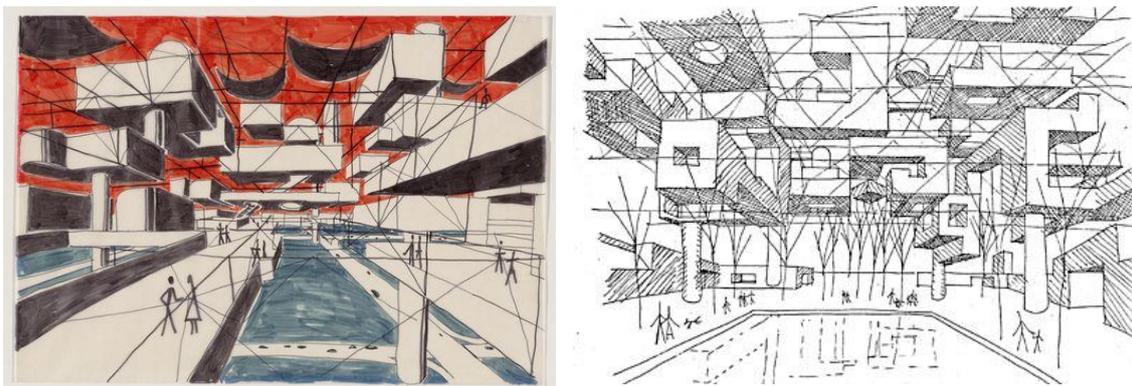

Figure 3, 4. *Yona Friedman's "Spatial Cities" (URL-1 www. yonafridman.nl).*

With his imagination of a "Mobile Architecture" for mobile societies, Friedman celebrated the future integration of mobility into the practice of everyday life by the mid 20th century. Friedman's "spatial cities", which could be every city and anycity, constructed their existence not through space but through man and his movement. Friedman suggested elevated city spaces where people could live and work. With this principle he also hoped to introduce a method that could restrain the land use of growing cities. Friedman had two goals: First, to find new solutions for the problem of urban housing that avoided destroying the older parts of a city; and second, to develop compact cities that built above and upon the existing cities, thereby avoiding a diffusion outwards (2).

Developing transportation and communication increased the mobility of men in a shrinking world where transportation was done with communication. With the development of digital technology, the internet carried offices to homes, defining a new area for motion. This new zone of movement initiated a new way of spatial existence. With the internet, it is now possible to

wander in the streets of any city that we have never visited and to chat with the people living there as if they are on our side. So, our bodies' primary physical and sensual relationships with the environment have been transformed into new modes of representational images (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Yandex (www.yandex.com).

The metropolis could be considered as one primary space where these new images emerge. One of the most crucial problems of the metropolitan life is "time". Almost every action or practice aims at achieving a result in a minimum time period. It is important to arrive somewhere faster, reach a solution faster, connect faster; in kitchens, schools, hospitals, banks, government offices it is more important to be quicker and more practical. In a world where time has crucial importance, "speed" also becomes indispensable. The effective role of speed in the metropolitan life also affects our empiric relation with the world.

Experiences of living in the city are realized most quickly through the visual senses (Pallasmaa, 2009). So, the dominating visual sense pushes other bodily senses back, and eventually diminishes our physical / bodily world experiences.

According to Pallasmaa (2009), in the 21st century it is impossible to merge our worldly experience with our self-image because of the dominance of the visual. While other senses are connecting us with the world, seeing detaches us from it.

In the 12th İstanbul Biennial (2011), Refik Anadol and architect Alper Derinboğaz, created an installation in which they first recorded the sounds from Taksim to Tünel and then transformed them into mathematical three dimensional visuals. These three dimensional visuals were reflected on the 200 square-meter façade of the Yapı Kredi Bank, Galatasaray and with the visualization of sound the experimenting subject transformed into watching subject. 'Seeing' replaced 'hearing' and sound gained visibility (Figure 6).

While structuring the conceptual framework of "multi-sensory experience" Pallasmaa (2009) referred to Merlau-Ponty (1992). Merlau-Ponty (1992) defined the human body as the center of the world of experience and emphasized synchronization and interaction of senses. Reception is not a

sum of audio-visual or tactile senses. We sense holistically by all our existence.

Figure 6. *The installation of Refik Anadol and Alper Deriboğaz, 12th İstanbul Biannale.*

Connerton (2009) in his work "How Modernity Forgets?" argues that among the great changes brought about modernity is that of social amnesia. For him, there exists a relation between the division of the direct relations between the body and the world into modern material practices and the process of cultural and social amnesia. Maps could be considered as one of the examples of these processes of forgetfulness as the human perception of spatial representation leaves its place to the techniques of metric measurement.

In medieval maps, instead of rational and objective qualities of the spatial order, its emotional aspects were emphasized. This is because of the distinction between route and map, as highlighted by de Certeau (1984). A route represents a destination where the start and end points are known and defines how to reach from one place to another (Connerton, 2009). So, it carries a representational quality related with human and with the perception and movement of the body. Maps, on the other hand, are visual representational techniques that depend on mathematical calculations of physical geography (Figure 7 and 8).

Figure 7*. 15th Century Map (perceptional).*

Figure 8. *21st Century Map (mathematical).*

III.

Another example for the division of direct body-world relation into modern material practices would be the post-industrial end-user who has been detached from the process of production.

Lukacs (1971) in his work "History & Class Consciousness" talks about how the capitalist modes of production make us forget this very process that creates it. Under the title "Adhocracy" 2012 Istanbul Design Bienale aimed to remind us of this forgotten process. Here, against the mass-production which is considered to be one of the most significant benchmarks of modernization, the biennale supported the involvement of the user in the design process and hoped to change the passive position of the user into an active one. In this respect, the objective of the biennale could be considered as a reminder of the long-forgotten "process of production".

According to Connerton (2009) the beginning of commodification is related to the modern social life which ignores the cultural production modes of a product. While the use-value of goods was primary in the pre-modern world, now it is the exchange value which matters. Adam Smith, in his book "Wealth of Nations" published in 1776, considered goods not as an aesthetic value, but as a channel for monetary exchange and for satisfying needs through supply-demand cycle. The world's fairs of the 19th century could be considered as a turning point for the commodification of goods and domination of aesthetic value over use value due to the forgetting of the production processes.

The department stores of the 1876 Paris Exposition Universelle which was four times larger than the previous exhibitions was defined as: The department stores were described as 'large and well organised', with their merchandise "arranged in perfect order, set in rows on shelves with everything symmetrical and precisely positioned". The whole world was invited to experience the charming but systematic distribution of commodities, the new desires and needs organized by modern capitalism. Windows placed between the visitors and exhibited goods turned the visitors into spectators by distancing and objectifying goods. Commodity no longer represented the real labor or real social life of the ones producing them (Mitchell, 1988). As a result of the transformation of commodified goods into aesthetic objects, the production process has been forgotten. Individuals and the products which they consume have been distanced from each other similar to the body and the city. It became impossible for the individual to directly experience or perceive the environment that he lived in or the goods that he used.

The Montreal Exposition of 1967 could be accepted as the end point of this process as Umberto Eco wrote that it was there that packaging became more prominent than the goods themselves. The individual was disconnected from the commodity, detached from its use-value and production process and against his physical or tactile senses takes experienced them as a visual outcome.

As a result, in both examples, two main concerns, "speed" and "indirect interaction" changed the way man interacts with his environment, and reduced his physical existence into visual conception. This reduction could be accepted as the forgetting of the physical language. As stated by Ponty (1968), "the osmotic, porous relation between the world and the body" could

only be discovered by the individual who felt himself as a part of the whole, a holistic relationship rendered impossible by the speed of modern urban life. Metropolises could be considered as the final places in which we tend to forget our bodies and souls.

IV.

> *The best streets are those that can be remembered. They leave strong, long-continuing, positive impressions. Thinking of a city, including owns own, one might well think of a particular street and have a desire to be there, such a street is memorable. (...)There is magic to great streets. We are attracted to the best of them not because we have to go there but because we want to be there. The best are as joyful as they are utilitarian. They are entertaining and they are open to all. They permit anonymity at the same time as individual recognition. They are symbol of a community and of its history; they represent public memory.*

> *Jacobs, A., Great Streets, MIT Press, pp. 9-11.*

Alienation towards the changing environment and the feeling of belonging could be stated as two reasons for the increasing number of studies related to memory during the 20th century. Belonging and security are at cross-purposes to modernity's ethic of transportation. Right at this point, Huyssen (1999) states that the modern persona of the 21st century is obsessed with "memory".

Pierre Nora (1972) argues that we have fragmented consciousness and memory because we are living in the process of transformation and are unable to find the traces of the past after these changes. This process harms the feeling of confidence which is defined as a time related concept based on the relation between past and present. We can't trust without having any a priori information. The concept of "familiarity" fundamentally requires trust and thus a knowledge of past. Because people tend to believe that the familiar will stay the same in the future (Connerton, 2009). Therefore, metropolises are not able to produce the feeling of trust as they are based on ephemerality rather than permanence.

Structured over the city and architecture, our memories are strictly bound to the relations and connections between spaces and spatial systems. With the deformation of this system which has a significant role in the formation of urban and public memory, a process of forgetting has begun. Cities gain new forms with its forgotten traces which, in the end, structure memory through forgetting rather than remembering. This loss of memory through lost urban or spatial traces generates a new way of structure. Things remembered and forgotten, things significant and insignificant are continuously shifting in between the stratified structure of the metropolis (Figure 9).

Considering that metropolises are being fed by fast and dense global flow and are in constant movement, people need deep roots and foundations which will prevent their loss in this transformation. Now it is important to analyze Bilsel's (2004) argument: "It is not their geographical size but their complexity, variety, density, and 'historic cores' which makes world cities, real metropolises."

Historic places, transform into *mise en scenes* within the fragmented structure of the metropolis. Because, like everything else in metropolis, history can also be consumed and historic places are not where we experience and live the past but where we see the past as a visual object. Still this historicity is important, because of the slippery ground and fluid images of the metropolis –as previously mentioned by Bilsel (2004) – it gives a feeling of comfort and familiarity.
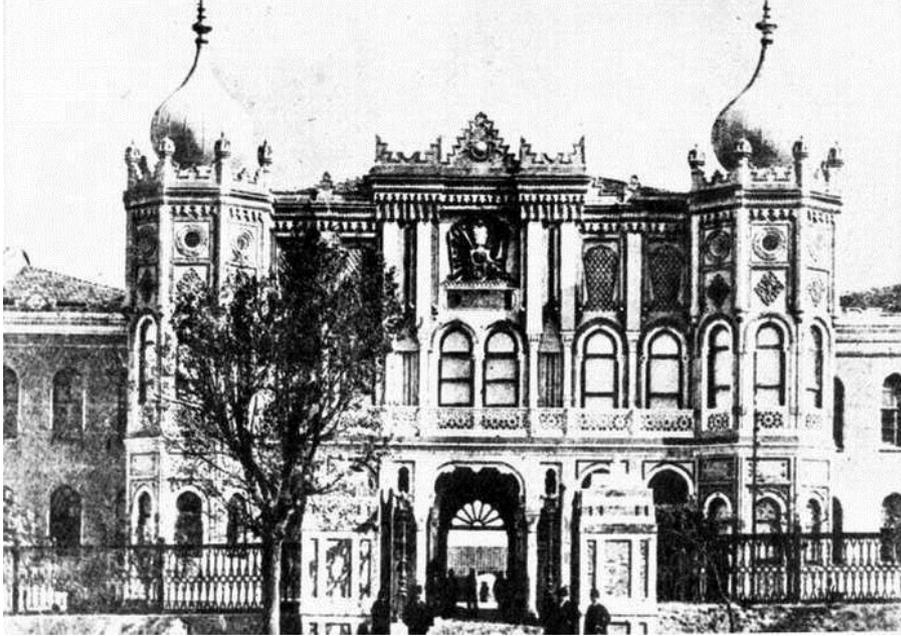

Figure 9. *"Topçu Kışlası".*

As a result, in the context of spatial memory, metropolises are urban environments inclined towards forgetting, rather than remembering. And if Istanbul is a metropolis, how long can it remain as a familiar and secure place with its mobile and slippery ground? We can find an answer to this question in our polar definitions of Istanbul.

(1) http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropol
(2) Soja (1989), Zukin (1996), Harvey(1999), Koollhaas (1994), Castells (2008) etc.

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Metropolün belleği / metropolde hatırlamak ve unutmak

Metropol kelimesi, Yunanca meter (anne, ana) ve polis (şehir, kent) kelimelerinin birleşiminden oluşan meterpolis kelimesinin yıllar içinde kısalarak değişmesinden oluşmakta ve *anakent* anlamına gelmektedir. İç içe geçmiş kent parçalarından oluşan, kültür ve ekonomi yönünden diğer kentlerden daha fazla gelişmiş "merkez şehir" olarak tanımlanan metropoller (1), dolayısıyla kentlere ilişkin fakat yalnız

mekandan beslenmeyen bir katmanlılık ve hibritliğin de ifadesidirler. Bu katmanlılık, kimi zaman tarihsel bir arkaplana referans vermekle birlikte, daha çok bugüne ilişkin bir ilişkiler ağının çok yönlü etkileşim alanını tariflemektedir. Metropol kavramı her ne kadar mekansal bir referans taşıyarak, kentlere ilişkin bir yoğunluğa atıfta bulunsa da, atfedilen nitelik, tam da Giddens (1994)'ın kentleri "sosyal bir oluşum" olarak açıklaması gibi mekanlar üstüdür.

Ağ toplumunun en belirgin karakteristik özellikleri zaman ve mekân kavramlarındaki değişikliklerde ortaya çıkmaktadır. Tüm ilişkiler yer ve zamandan bağımsız olarak, bu ağlar üzerinden yürüyebilmektedir. Fakat dikkat edilmesi gereken, bu ağların tüm kenti bütünsel olarak birbirine bağlamamasıdır. Farklı ilişkilerin farklı etkileşim kanalları bulunmakta, bu kanallar bazen aynı yerde aynı zamanda birbirinin üstünden geçse dahi kesişmemektedir. Dolayısıyla bu üstüste biriken fakat birbirinden ayrı çalışan fragmantel ağ yapısı, kentte bir tür 'ilişkiler kolajı' oluşturmaktadır. Metropollerde geçmiş düzen ve ilişkilerin üzerinde sürekli değişerek ve onlarla her defasında farklı ilişkiler kurarak 'devingen bir palimpsest' yapı oluşumuna da bu kolaj yapı neden olmaktadır.

Metropollerin palimpsest olma niteliğini sağlayan önemli etkenlerden biri de, bir dünya kenti niteliği taşımalarıdır. Şöyle ki; metropoller, bulunduğu coğrafyanın geçmişe dair izlerini sosyal ve mekansal olarak taşısalar da aslında tüm dünyadan beslenen çok yönlü bir akış içinde, çok hızlı biçim değişitirmektedirler. Bu akış, küreselleşen dünyada her ne kadar birbirine benzer kent ve metropol görüntüleri üretse de, yine de her metropol, tam da bu palimpsest ve onun katmanları nedeniyle, kendi olmayı da sürdürmektedir.

Hızın kente entegrasyonu, modern yaşamı ve toplumsallığı, modern öncesi dönemden ayıran, önemli kırılma noktalarından biri olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Hız ve örgütlenmiş (mekanikleşmiş) hareketin toplumsal yaşamı değiştirici gücü, metropollerin bellek bağlamında tartışmayı gerektiren önemli etkenlerdendir.

Metropol kavramı, modern sonrası döneme ait bir sorunsaldır ve bugün anladığımız biçimiyle algılanan yapısı endüstrileşme sonrası dönemde hızla değişen mekan ve zaman kavrayışı üzerinden gelişmiştir. Metropollerde, insanın yaşadığı dünya ile etkileşim biçimleri diğer kentlerden farklılıklar göstermektedir. Dolayısıyla modernleşme sonrasında bireyin mekanla değişen ilşkisini anlamak, metropolde geçen yaşamın zihniyet ve bellek dünyasını anlamak açısından da önemlidir.

Sonuç olarak, mekandan bağımsızlaşan bireyin, metropol yaşamında hatırlama ve unutma pratiklerini nasıl gerçekleştirdiği bu makalenin konusunu oluşturmaktadır. Makalede aynı zamanda metropollerin kalıcılıktan çok geçiciliğe ilişkin referanslar taşıyan, unutma eğilimli topografyasına ışık tutulurken, bir yandan da bir metropol olarak İstanbul'u bellek bağlamında nasıl değerlendirebileceğimize ilişkin yeni ipuçları önerilmektedir.