Mapping cognitive capitalism to mitigate urban museification[1]

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Abstract. The aim of the article is to map the changes undergone by cognitive capitalism to gain an understanding of the contemporary city. First, the article takes a conceptual approach in order to perceive current urban cultural problematics. At the same time, it seeks to reconstruct the genealogy of leisure tourism, analyzing its transformations and exploring the complex framework of enhancement promoted to museify contemporary cities, establishing to this end a fundamental nexus between cultural consumption and the tourist industry. Finally, the article promotes a critical and reflexive approach to formulating possible alternatives to mitigate urban museification.

Keywords: Cities and towns; urbanism; tourism; leisure; museification; cognitive capitalism.

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Introduction

The title of this article reflects the quest for the articulation of a conceptual intervention strategy that orientates subjects spatially and temporally within the urban flow, to find a way of mitigating the museification of the city. It is based on the concept of Giorgio Agamben (2013) – to be explored in depth throughout this article – which accounts for a process of constitutive separation of the city in relation to the "habitation" of the citizen. This operation alludes to the movement that emanates from the sacred-profane dichotomy[2] in which the "use" of the city for tourism outlines a configuration of the "view" of the metropolises. That is, for this Italian philosopher, the city has gradually undergone a process of reconfiguration, starting from the end of the 1970s and continuing to the present day, in which the preponderance of the automobile and its motorways, the proliferation of cultural centers and museums, and the revaluation of historic and heritage centers have prevailed in urban cultural planning and the diagramming of cities. While there are exceptions, the worldwide urbanization process that has exploded along with globalization renders this problematic an unavoidable object of study. In turn, the territorial exploitation that occurs in cities takes into account the commercial character of the city, in addition to the implementation of certain logics from the museum field in which tensions associated with consumption and spectacle are condensed. That said, and given the encroachment of marketing and publicity strategies that simultaneously diagram becoming in cities, it is possible to note the areas that are "worth visiting" and those that are not. This is accompanied by the increasing

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2   According to Agamben, "the Roman jurists knew perfectly what it meant to "profane." Sacred or religious were the things that in some way belonged to the gods. As such, they were removed from the free use and commerce of men; they could be neither sold nor held in lien, neither given for usufruct nor burdened by servitude. Any act that violated or transgressed this special unavailability, which reserved these things exclusively for the celestial gods (in which case they were properly called "sacred") or for the gods of the underworld (in which case they were simply called "religious"), was sacrilegious. And if "to consecrate" (sacrare) was the term that indicated the removal of things from the sphere of human law, "to profane" meant, conversely, to return them to the free use of men [...]. The thing that is returned to the common use of men is pure, profane, free of sacred names. But use does not appear here as something natural: rather, one arrives at it only by means of profanation. There seems to be a peculiar relationship between "using" and "profaning" that we must clarify [...]. In this sense, we must distinguish between secularization and profanation. Secularization is a form of repression. It leaves intact the forces it deals with by simply moving them from one place to another. Thus the political secularization of theological concepts (the transcendence of God as a paradigm of sovereign power) does nothing but displace the heavenly monarchy onto an earthly monarchy, leaving its power intact. Profanation, however, neutralizes what it profanes. Once profaned, that which was unavailable and separate loses its aura and is returned to use. Both are political operations: the first guarantees the exercise of power by carrying it back to a sacred model; the second deactivates the apparatuses of power and returns to common use the spaces that power had seized." (2007, pp. 76-77).

stimulation of capitalism through technological devices and artifacts that transform one's stay in the city by cornering the substantive development of the cognitive plane. In the words of Berardi (2018), the global facet of capitalism has become "cognitive," since production and the exchange of abstract signs play a leading role in the entire process of accumulation. To put it another way, cognitive capitalism corresponds to the consumption practices that revolve around the production of knowledge, intangible goods, and platforms for providing services. Thus, the most extreme manifestation of cognitive capitalism centers on the predominance of financial abstraction, and mapping it would allow for a reorientation that provides an opportunity to "revitalize the encounter" in cities, since this encounter is based on a decentering of spaces as part of the profanation of the strategies of capture that have spread throughout the city and enabled the subtraction of its "use." Thus, before exploring the logic of the museification of the city, the movement of cognitive capitalism must first be understood.

Framed by the precipitate transformations of cognitive capitalism and its repercussions on social ties, we will explore the changes that the city has undergone in recent decades. Our intention is to begin with an analysis that will allow us to **assemble** certain temporal and spatial concepts: **cognitive mapping** (Jameson), **museification** of the city (Agamben and Huyssen), the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (Warburg), **dialectal images-constellations** (Benjamin), and **urban palimpsets** (Huyssen). While the problematics are disparate and the various concepts are characterized by the astonishing critical depth they achieve, our aim in this study is to articulate them and develop the most comprehensive analytical tool possible. In turn, starting from the assumptions of the intersection between the apparatus of cognitive capitalism and museification, we will attempt to transit the city and examine it politically, in search of new spaces of "encounter" that revitalize it and, in Agamben's terms: return it to "the free use of men."

This difficult task stems from reading Longoni and Davis's (2009) study, which proposes to map the debate on artistic vanguards by **disrupting** the naturalized slant and by marking out, boldly and disruptively, new genealogies that enable a rethink of the production of visibility and discourse vis-a-vis dominant historiographies, for which their present effects are interpellated. For this reason, starting from this genealogical premise, we will analyze the contemporary city and the manner in which it is enveloped in a complex production apparatus that connects the "flow" with a "consumer experience." Thus, we will begin with the figure of the artist-tourist, who allows us to:

> […] glimpse to what point certain institutional circuits of art replicate oiled mechanisms of tourist flows as a form of the nomadic utopia of consumption and facilitated accessibility to a domestically exotic world, without contingencies and apart from war (Longoni, 2010, p. 121).[3]

To unravel these "oiled mechanisms," we must first enter into the thematics of the city, to then enter deeper into its relationship with patterns of consumption and the tourism industry.

The city as encounter

The contemporary city has been widely studied by the social sciences, and from the beginning of the 20th century, Simmel, Benjamin, Kracauer and Schorske made vast sociocultural and urban contributions, which were followed by the analyses of Barthes, Berman, and Choay, among others. Thus, we will begin our urban analysis with the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2013), who conceives of the city as a set of intersections, trajectories, collisions, tremors, displacements, and emplacements, wherein our sojourn as passers-by in constant circulation is resolved. The interesting thing about Nancy is his consideration of the unresolved tension in which the conception of the city in constant motion is framed. Moreover, this tension is not just spatial but also temporal, so that the city of today resides in the spectacle of the city of yesterday: it conserves and restores, strips the facades, monumentalizes and "heritagizes," and, concurrently, deconstructs the past city. For Nancy, the city is also conceived as a work of art – that is, in principle, a work of technique, of the movement by which the event and the place are, in the first instance, left aside or neglected for the benefit of the process and the emplacement that allows for an event or an encounter. Thus, "the monument is the encounter of spacing and punctuation – which can also be formulated as the confluence between the real and the emblem, or the thing and the image, the city and the City" (Nancy, 2013, p. 59). Since the city is invented – expected, desired, called – from the **encounter**, it arises from the convergence, composition, and communication of encounters, and, if you like, from the "encounter of all encounters."[4] Thus, the city is conceived in an encounter that **remains** an encounter: the contingency of contact, a fleeting brush, chances taken

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3   Translation from the Spanish by *Apuntes*.
4   To elaborate on the notion of "encounter," it is worth referring to the analysis of Andy Merrifield (2011) in *The Right to the City and Beyond*, in which he conceives of a way of revitalizing certain commercialized public spaces in the city around "the politics of the encounter."

and lost. To this end, movement, displacement, and the renewal of the dynamic are vital conditions (Nancy, 2013).

Now, to be able to capture the city's constituent displacements and dynamics, it seems appropriate to begin by articulating concepts that can elucidate the spatial and temporal transformations that cognitive capitalism brought with it, given that the city and how it is approached have been transformed by monetary financialization, the deterritorialization of production and exchange, and the emergence of technologies that expanded the frontiers to a virtual plane. As such, characterizing tourism in today's society involves considering it as instituted know-how and, simultaneously, visualizing it through the transformations in its practices throughout history, and the way in which these are interlinked with socioeconomic contexts and the production of knowledge. To do so, we will delve into these vicissitudes in order to briefly map the problematic, which will allow us to reconstruct the genealogy of leisure tourism, by exploring the various changes that the activity has undergone and the complex framework of enhancement promoted in contemporary cities to channel the becoming of their flows and museify the city (Agamben, 2007).

Tourism, a genealogy of leisure

We will begin by analyzing the conceptions of tourism proposed by John Urry (2004). In the first instance, the British sociologist argues that tourism is a leisure activity that starts off with its opposite – that is, paid, organized, and regulated work. This idea is based on the ancient Greek duality: *otium* and *negotium*. The notion of *otium* refers to leisure or free time, all that does not involve the world of work, and is the opposite of *negotium*, or business. However, to fully explore the genealogy of leisure, we will track the various connotations and meanings that this concept has had throughout history (Sue, 1980/1982).

Leisure arose in ancient Greece as something exclusive to citizens. The notion is linked to the creation of knowledge and the gradients of education that could be attained for the betterment of the human condition – not with an idea of entertainment or distraction. This connotation began to mutate during the Roman Empire, during which, after many years of importation and appropriation of Greek meanings, legacies, and gods, there was a significant shift in the semantics associated with the term. The concept of leisure began to be associated with enjoyment and the education of citizens, forged by the construction of identity and allegiance of various peoples within the vast territorial expanses captured by the Roman Empire, in an attempt to maintain permanent consensus and social order. From these derivations,

and with the incorporation of the dimension of leisure as a public good, an incipient connection with entertainment began to emerge.

With the passing of the centuries, and by the Medieval era, the conception of leisure had been restricted by harvest and religious calendars, whereby free time was highly ritualized due to its association with the ways of the divine-sacred. Therefore, the structural condition of leisure appears as a guarantor of a given social order. That is, a distinguished individual would reproduce inequality through his practices, which were likewise distinguished. But, with the advent and consolidation of capitalism, another mutation occurred. From the centrality assumed by work, not only in relation to the Industrial Revolution but also the multiple socio-structural changes that reconfigured order, leisure came to be perceived in relation to "vagrancy." That is, the right to free time was historically constructed and granted to the upper classes by way of notions linked to merit in the labor and commercial-mercantile order, or to old notions of nobility. Patterns of leisure reproduced those of the elite as objects of desire for the "others." Capitalism promoted this distinction, and still does so; and, at the same time, it proclaimed that free time – which was not conceived as related to work – should be perceived as a loss to the productive system.

With the advances and transformations of capitalism itself, these notions shifted toward mass forms of tourism, propelled by the universalization of consumption and the incorporation of a production matrix by way of inclusion. A clear example of this is "sun and sand tourism," the origins of which are associated with palliative healthcare, as a derivation of ritualized forms of thermalism. Indeed, according to Bernard Toulier and Caroline Rose (2002), the concept of bathing in the sea is a derivation of "thermal cure," and so this healthy practice spread, in the beginning among the elites, who had the time to "purify themselves" from the city, and later came to be just another cog in the mass capitalist production system. In Argentina, this can be observed in the transformations of the "grand hotel" vacation format, emblematic of elitist and isolated tourist enclaves that promoted the idea of distinguished diversion linked to socialization (civilization among "peers" and imbued with nature), games, and the attraction of play. In other words, the mutation into a spectrum of mass appeal was an increasingly important component of consumer society, involving the dissemination of tourist destinations and greater variation in terms of the goods and services offered.

The growth of tourism was crystallized in the notion of social rights, inscribed in the lineage of expanding labor rights as a product of political consolidations and identity constructions. "Horizontal property," which made longer stays affordable to those on lower incomes, replicated this trend

throughout Argentina; this, added to the proliferation of a broader range of hotels, hastened the decline of the aforementioned "grand hotels," leading to their ultimate closure and subsequent demolition or conversion. Accessibility was another pivotal factor leading to the advent of "mass tourism." The early paving of National Route No. 2 broke the monopoly of rail transportation in Argentina, consolidating automobile travel and making a clear impact on the reorganization of the city by making it feasible for tourists to travel greater distances from their homes to the beach (Bertoncello, 2006). Real estate developers were also important to the establishment of beach resorts, promoting the economic dynamic of the tourist offer as property values fluctuated, as well as the preponderance of certain areas that merited preservation for tourism (Harvey, 2013).

In other words, the changes in industrial capitalism had – and continue to have – repercussions on tourism, which began to incorporate, simultaneously and gradually, alternatives to standardization or mass tourism. This led to new efforts to achieve fragmentation, differentiation, and multiplication of varieties of tourism. The process converged with the notion of tourism as a vector that promoted business, taken on by social actors as strategies to confront the frequent economic crises, conceptualizing tourism as a "driver of local development." This stimulated differentiated consumption through the exploitation of predominant niches of demand, in which new technologies thrived. Thus, the development of a technological base was essential to facilitate the fragmented and heterogeneous output, fostering connectivity, accessibility, and the multiplication of consumption associated with the pursuit of a product that met consumer demands. An obvious example of this is nature tourism, framed as a conservation system in which "the spirit is strengthened," representations of "the divine" are ventured, and nature is contemplated by extolling the visual aspect of the landscape – obviously starting with a landscape with a predetermined gaze, based on a cultural operation that constructs a given meaning. In parallel, "fantasy tourism" (Cohen, 2005) involves the enjoyment of artificial experiences in artificial places, while "extreme tourism" promotes difficult activities as challenges to overcome. And so on, with different varieties of specialized tourism (Lash & Urry, 1998).

Globally, this has resulted in the touristification of the planet, whereby new dimensions re-differentiate the standardized and multiply attractions by way of techniques such as aestheticization (heritage promotion), thematization (differentiation or emphasis on the movement of the actors), and hierarchization (gentrification of the urban space). Now, in order to provide a framework for the touristification of the planet, it is worth analyzing tourism

as an object of study, for which we will avail ourselves of the perspectives of Urry and MacCannell. These authors assert that tourist sites and the tourist gaze are formed through the intense practices and experiences that tourists deal with. "To be a tourist is one of the characteristics of the 'modern' experience" (Urry, 2002, p.4). This, according to MacCannell, lies in the quest for authenticity, which is a modern version of the universal human concern for the sacred. "The tourist is a kind of contemporary pilgrim, seeking authenticity in other 'times' and other 'places' away from that person's everyday life (Urry, 2002, p. 9). Thus, "tourist spaces" are organized around what MacCannell calls "staged authenticity." MacCannell (2003) also argues that there is usually a process of sacralization that turns a particular natural or cultural artifact into a sacred object of the tourist ritual.[5] There are a series of stages involved: assigning a name to the location, its framing and elevation, its conversion into a sanctuary, the mechanical reproduction of the sacred object, and social reproduction whereby other places (or "locations") use the name of the famous site. Thus, tourism practices are associated with experiences of liminality or rites of passage in which the codes of normal social experience are disrupted. This means unraveling the dialectic of the novel and the insatiability at the heart of modern consumerism, enabling recognition of specific attributes of places which, once converted into tourist attractions, define their status as tourist sites (Benjamin, 2011).

Along similar lines, Muñoz (2008) contends that the city made tourist site implies the standardization of the landscape and social gentrification, assuming the emergence of that site as a product of image as the city's primary factor of production; the need for adequate conditions of urban security; the use of public spaces as "leisure beaches"; and the "part-time" consumption of the urban space. Thus, to understand these processes of touristification, it is necessary to explore the tourism industry from a reflective critical perspective.

The tourism industry

The tourism industry, according to Fredric Jameson (2014), tends to turn culture into spectacle, differences into exoticism, customs founded on centuries of history into manifestations of the picturesque. Thus processed, places of tourism are typified and sold – as places worthy of being filmed and

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5   In this case, MacCannell subscribes to the process of consecration that Giorgio Agamben (2013) develops in his essay "In Praise of Profanation,"in which he proposes that the processes of consecration and profanation are two operations that equate the passage of an object, place, or personality from the profane to the sacred, or vice-versa.

photographed – based on a "visiting" attitude in which tourists seldom have the time, opportunity, or inclination to engage in contact with inhabitants, residents, or locals (Capanegra, 2010). Commodified and standardized, the significations of people and landscapes are impoverished and alienated from their history, reducing them to mere anecdotes recited by guides. Handicrafts and festivals, products of history and culture, endowed with value and bearers of important symbolic functions, are emptied of content and left as no more than decorative objects with descriptive cosmetics (MacCannell, 2003).

This critical vision of tourism, in the tradition of Western Marxism, goes back at least as far as Marx, whose celebrated first chapter of *Das Capital* deals with the **fetishism of commodities**. The 19th-century religious perspective coincides with the way in which Marx stresses a specifically superstructural dimension in the capitalist exchange of commodities. Marx understood that it was through "metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties" that labor relations were concealed from the eyes of the buyer, and thus understood commodification as an essentially ideological operation, a form of false knowledge that performed the specific function of masking value production before the consumer (Lukács, 1969). The classical philosophical work of Lukács (1969) develops this analysis on the wider plane of the history of philosophy, restoring commodification to the center of the global social process with the incorporation of **reification**. For their part, the situationists and their brilliant theorist Debord shaped a new perspective on commodification with the aphorism: the last form of commodity fetishism is the image (2000). This is the starting point of Debord's theory on **the society of the spectacle**, in which the old "wealth of nations" is now understood as an "immense accumulation of spectacles." The idea that we buy images shifts the process toward a new form of desire, and situates it on a symbolic-ideological plane that is consistent with the constant modern-day intepellation of technological and virtual devices. These reticular forms of image and information fluidity more unequivocally represent the wave-like dynamics of late capitalism (Deleuze, 1999). This analytical and conceptual shift is part of a contemporary vision of culture that Lefebvre brought closer, intuitively and theoretically, to urban problematics (Jameson, 2014).

Thus, understanding the contemporary city involves the cultural notion of circulation of flows and transits, in which objects and agents are related through a plurality of interconnected agents (Ascher, 2004), assuming that the social practices of individuals transform their experiences of the city (García Vázquez, 2015). Now, to reach this understanding, there is a need for a comprehensive and totalizing approach; thus, we will begin

with Jameson's (2014) cognitive mapping, which will furnish us with the fundamental explanatory horizons with which to approach this task.

Cognitive mapping

Jameson borrowed the notion of cognitive mapping from *The Image of the City* by the geographer Kevin Lynch (1998), who used it to describe how individuals give meaning to their urban environments. Indeed, with reference to the spatial chaos that technological and financial changes unleashed in the metropolitan centers after the 1970s, Fredric Jameson (1991) highlighted the lack of "a cognitive mapping aesthetic" that could serve as an intersection between the individual and the social to prepare subjects to function in the urban spaces they pass through, in that such an intersection would resolve the inability of our minds – at least at present – to map the great global, multinational, and decentered communications network in which we are trapped. North American cultural criticism conceived of this mapping aesthetic as a collective pedagogy, whose challenge lies in the possibility of relating the abstract knowledge of global realities to the perceptible presence of imaginary figures who orientate the everyday urban experience. To achieve this correlation between abstraction and sensibility, it is necessary to work on two planes at once: on the one hand, the epistemological ruptures that can result from traditional criticism of representation; and on the other, the incipient individual management of urban space graphed through the unfolding of radially new visual and technical vocabularies.

For Jameson (1991), **cognitive mapping** is the most appropriate way of understanding the social world of today, because it allows for the reconfiguration of the dynamics of national and social spaces. Indeed, what cognitive mapping permits is a situational representation by the individual subject of the vast, unrepresentable totality that is the structure of the city as a whole. However, there is another line of development that stems from mapping itself, and constitutes its key mediator. Mapping, as a science is limited, not only by its deliberate restriction to problems related to the urban form, but also because it does not concern what is implied by mapping in Jameson's sense. Thus, the operations that comprise Lynch's model correspond to "pre-cartographic operations, the results of which are traditionally described as itineraries and not maps: diagrams organized around travel – centered on the subject – that signal various significant characteristics such as oases, mountain chains, rivers, monuments, and so on. The most developed of these diagrams is the nautical itinerary: the sea chart known as the portulano. However, Jameson (1991) completely transforms the problematic of the itinerary by introducing a new dimension to sea charts. This dimension,

which analytically revolutionizes the concept, is based on the relationship that map design forms with the totality – by way of compasses, for example. On this point, the plotting of a cognitive map requires coordination of existential data with abstract notions of geographic totality. This gives rise to a third dimension of mapping, which proposes:

> […] what we would today call the nature of representational codes, the intrinsic structures of the various media, the intervention, into more naive mimetic conceptions of mapping, of the whole new fundamental question of the languages of representation itself, in particular the unresolvable (well-nigh Heisenbergian) dilemma of the transfer of curved space to flat charts. At this point it becomes clear that there can be no true maps (Jameson, 1991, p. 90).

In short, cognitive mapping needs something more than mere development. Fundamentally, it is a metaphor that must be broken down into a series of concepts that can relate the individual with the social. However, Jameson (1991) makes us think again about these specific questions of geography and mapping, in terms of the social space, by using Althusser's concept of ideology to intervene in the instruments of these areas. This intervention also involves coming face-to-face with the changes to the very production conditions in the global space of late transnational capitalism. For this reason, intervention and reconfiguration face a second difficulty, in the form of the unrepresentable character of the international system – that is, in the gap between concrete existential experience and the scientific knowledge that exists around it. The cognitive map is built on this representative breach as a tool of exploration and (critical) relocation of the world economic system (Jameson, 2014). By attempting to reimagine an economic system on a global scale, and given the prevailing fragmentary narrative to which postmodernism drags us, even if it is involuntary, the old motif of **conspiracy** is revitalized as a **narrative structure**: a potentially infinite network alongside a plausible explanation of its invisibility; in other words, the collective and the epistemological. Indeed, it is the impossible vision of totality, recovered here at the point at which the emergence of conspiracy confirms the possibility of the unity of the social order, that is celebrated at this **performative** moment.[6] In this way, the map of conspiracy

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6   As Butler (2010) observes, **performativity and performance** are concepts used in the social sciences mainly to think about **the social** as **effects**, understanding that the performative source of a proposition or a distinction lies not only in the stabilization of expectations by way of symbolic forms, but also in the formation of cultural configurations (Farías, 2014).

itself unexpectedly suggests the possibility of cognitive mapping as a whole, confirming that the momentary coincidence between knowledge as such and the architectural order of the astronomic totality offers a glimpse of the providential, of that which organizes history but cannot be represented within it (Jameson, 2014).

Therefore, the aesthetic of cognitive mapping arise as a pedagogical political culture that seeks to provide the individual subject a new sense of their place in the global system by giving undeniable prominence to the dialectic of representation and its radically new forms. This is because this change is a long way from corresponding to a return to an older and transparent national space, or to a more mimetic or traditional enclave with a more reassuring perspectival. New political art will have, according to Jameson (1991), to assimilate the changes undergone by postmodernism: that is, a **new superficiality,** the consequent **weakening of historicity**, **a completely new tone on the intimate-emotional terrain,** and the profound constituent relationships between all of this and a **new technology** that in itself represents a **new world economic system**. Thus, plotting a cognitive map will mean incorporating postmodernism and recovering the capacity to act and struggle, which has been neutralized by our spatial and social confusion.

Even so, all of the conceptual problematics to which Jameson submits the cognitive map are formulated from an ideological-spatial axis, which implies that the temporal facet has not yet been complexified. It is here that the historicist point of view resides as part of this coordination. That is, the temporal dimension is also involved in the mapping; it is here that we go into greater depth and complement our study with the methodology of Warburg (2010), the "constellations" of Benjamin (2011), and the "urban palimpsest" of Huyssen (2002).

The Warburg method, Benjamin's constellation and the urban palimpsest

Warburg's (2010) model aspires to reconstruct a heuristic method for researching memory and images; it seeks to accumulate images from various civilizations realized through all conceivable mediums and destined for all imaginable functions, to achieve the aim of building a continuous, iridescent, and exhaustive spectrum of representations in which the secular fabric of Western memory is reproduced: the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (Burucúa, 2008). Warburg, from his cultural ontology and certain notions of phenomenological psychology, such as the notion of **engram** – a stable and reinforced series of traces that certain external stimuli have left on the psyche, and which produce automated responses vis-a-vis the reappearance of those

same stimuli – attempts to condense into perceptible mechanisms a flow opposed to that of the habitual procedure of memory, and provoke with it the memory of primary experiences of humanity (Burucúa, 2008). Put differently, Warburg seeks to capture "life in motion" through a decidedly symbolic model, "a cultural model of history in which temporal periods are no longer fashioned according to biomorphic stages, but, instead, are expressed by strata, hybrid blocks, rhizomes, specific complexities, by returns that are often unexpected and goals that are always thwarted. (Didi-Huberman, 2016, p. 43). In Warburg, images assume a fundamental role in the transmission and conceptualization of the survival of the past. *Pathosformeln* – formulas of *pathos* – possess by definition a *Nachleben* – that is, they can survive the passage of time and can preserve and transmit content, forms, and emotions, as they are marked "engramatically" by the forces of the past (Vargas, 2014). Thus, what Warburg's (2010) project proposes is an atlas of open-mapping, with diffuse semantic limits for successive extensions of field or content or the discovery of new territories. Aby Warburg speaks of a network of relations between established objects.

The references break the limits of temporality and continuity, enabling constant re-readings that evince a surprising and elusive ability to relate the diverse. This is the fascinating dynamic proposed by Warburg's atlas (Burucúa, 2008). However, this dynamic is the great theme in the contemporary aesthetic, its central problematic, because concentrated therein is the organization of the multiple: relations prevail over objects, tree structures over points, the passage over the presence, the journey over the stations that comprise it. In other words,

> [...] the predominance of multiplicity has the corollary of a **heterochronic** conception of time: beyond the 'pure presence' and momentariness that distinguish the modernist work as a world-unto-itself, contemporary art postulates multiple temporalities – a representation of time evoking the **constellation** (Bourriaud, 2016, p.57; emphasis ours).

This leads us to the omnipresence of reticular forms in contemporary art – especially the figure of the **constellation** and its derivatives – emanating from the evolution of the technique, which conform to sociological causes linked to current global civilization. For Bourriaud, who draws on Benjamin as well as Warburg, "a constellation – an 'asterism' – is a figure constructed through formal analogy, an arbitrary object given shape by connecting scattered elements, a folding of space and time." (2016, p.60). And so, the form of **constellation**, in the case of Benjamin (2011), is associated with a general concept of the "legibility" of history (*Lesbarkeit*), concerning an

asterochronic reading that establishes connections between events that are disparate in space and time. And, perceiving the symptoms of our present condition in the traces that history has left behind allows us to discern:

> […] the light flashing with greater or lesser intensity, of the 'dialectical image' that signaled for Benjamin the transition between yesterday and today. 'It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past,' he observed, rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.' (Bourriaud, 2016, p. 73).

Thus, in Benjamin as in Warburg, the conception of works of art as "forms of life" and objects that can transmit contents charged with vitality is something that modifies their relationship with history. The thinking of these authors leads to a revision of the traditional foundations of art history and culture and inaugurates a form of history with a spectral character (Grüner, 2017). That is, in this way of viewing history, that which endures or which comes from remote epochs is not under the control of the subjects that experience or recognize it. For Aby Warburg, the survival of an ornament takes the form of a fantasy and a symptom whose irruption comes from heterogeneous and faraway times. Benjamin (2011), for his part, thinks of origin as a "**whirlpool**" in the river of becoming, since it is not considered as a beginning, but something new formed of the encounter around a phenomenon that clouds history and breaks with the linear ordering of genealogical temporality. Thus, the form of the constellation incites a deeper reflection that can come together in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* of Warburg (2010), a kind of monument that has found its total **legibility** in our epoch, as it anticipates interdisciplinary iconographic research, the pursuit of analogies and browsing – that is, the common denominator of cultural experience today (Bourriaud, 2016). Thus:

> […] If the system of thinking that Warburg set up represents the object of such fascination today, this is because it corresponds to the dominant visual matrix of our epoch. Networks, maps, charts, diagrams and constellations feature in contemporary art because they share a **reticular** structure: an array of points connected with each other by links, whether the latter are visible or not. Their raw material is, in essence, visual information, akin to the logic of 'browsing' that internet users employ when clicking from one site to another. (Bourriaud, 2016, p. 62).

For his part, Huyssen (2002) highlights a particular way of conceiving the city that engages perfectly with the reticular structures condensing space and temporality: as a literary chronotope.[7] The German critic proposes the designation of the **urban palimpsest** as an amalgamated landscape composed of various built forms that, with the passage of time, are superimposed onto one another. In some cases, the first layers have truly ancient origins that date back to the earliest civilizations, and their traces can still be discerned in the current urban fabric. The palimpsest is a type of text, of writing, whose peculiarity lies in the fact that part of it is borrowed, while other parts are superimposed in different temporalities. Huyssen (2002) uses the concept of urban **palimpsest** to capture the dimension of memory, addressing the different historical layers and narratives became visible: for example, Berlin after the fall of the Wall in 1989. That is, Huyssen conceives of the urban palimpsest as a tool for approaching cities from their politics of memory, which enables the articulation of the desire to preserve in the discussion over the public space, where not only does the intention to preserve contain the same function or meaning as the original place, but this original space can be **used** for the convergence of past memories with current urban configurations. For this reason, even relatively modern cities contain particular layers that have gradually accumulated in the different stages of transformation; in the chaotic urban growth engendered by industrialization; in colonial conquest; in neocolonial domination; and in wave after wave of speculative change and modernization.

So, can a city be perceived as a unit? Huyssen (2002) bases his analysis on the perception of the city, which is still recorded as a unit. Thus, through the **urban palimpsest**, he takes a literary tour through the modernist works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, where he finds evidence of a relationship between the changes in literary narratives and the perception of urban transformations focused on the emergence of photography and cinema. These mediums measured the mass and popular visuality of the city. Consequently, Huyssen (2002) proposes, following Ascher (2004), that contemporary cities have become metropolises: discontinuous and non-adjacent entities linked by transportation networks and developed telecommunications systems. Now, this reticular vision of the metropolis confronts a certain type of attempt to produce images that still seek to recon-

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7 **Chronotope** –that which semantically signifies "time-space" –is the essential connection of temporal and spatial relations that are assimilated artistically in literature. This term expresses the indissoluble character of space and time, extending it as a category of form and content in literature. Time is condensed and compressed, it becomes visible from the artistic point of view; and space, in turn, intensifies and penetrates the movement of time (Bajtín, 1936-1937/1989).

struct the old city unit, with touristic and commercial ends, by appealing to the re-creation of a sort of lost urban nostalgia that is inconsistent with the controversial articulation dynamic proposed by the aforementioned projects of Benjamin, Warburg, and Huyssen. Thus, as noted above, Jameson (1991) argues, the very idea of conceiving of the city as a unit triggers the representation of the totality as impossible and unrepresentable and, at the same time, makes possible and motorizes the global network that connects today's cities as **units of consumption** (Featherstone, 2000).

Thus, in the age of the internet, real-time communication, and global hypermobility, it seems logical that new forms of perception and representation of space and time will take root,[8] submerged in cities conceived as "spaces of flows" (Castells, 2004; Mongin, 2006) and "global cities" (Sassen, 1999), whereby to interpret them is to conceive of them as a "spatially organized units of social consumption" (García Vázquez, 2015). This reveals the present ambivalent urban dynamic; the "spaces of flows" comprise not only the connection between exceedingly distant production spaces – connected by sophisticated mass production and transport systems – but also the concentration of financial and administrative control in these "global cities," endowed with the most advanced telecommunications technologies and infrastructure. This makes viable the universe of **permanent visual shocks** into which we are being cast, increasing the sensibility of the 21st century individual to an imaginary of multiplicity in search of reticular forms and places to cling to (Bourriaud, 2015). Thus, the hyper-production, hyper-abundance, and hyper-archiving of objects has caused the individual to go astray in the cities – deposits in the form of labyrinths – which explains the importance of itineraries, guides, and orientation manuals to regulate the urban experience, and this same dynamic will connect with cognitive mapping to decenter the paths established and mitigate the **museification of the city** (Garcia, 2018).

The becoming of the "flows" and the museification of the city

Now, this amalgam of concepts arises out of the concern driving the intention to understand how the dynamic of the city has fluctuated along with complex sociocultural, urban, tourist, and spatial transformations. The city emerges as our current experience where the spaces are determined by the "flows" and the "networks." This has multiple velocities, even though "the strength of the flows does not prevent urban practices from continuing to

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8   For more on this virtual and reticular conception of the consumer society see *The Age of Access* by Jeremy Rifkin (2000).

occur, even when they are weakened" (Mongin, 2006, p. 142). Thus, the current fragile urban practices affirm, in line with Nancy (2013), the city by way of an aesthetic in circulation, an imminent becoming of productions of experience in no way transcendental or representative: "The city is not a representation of the transits or the experiences of individuals, but it expresses and lives itself as an experience in permanent circulation. It is about transits, passages in which relations are developed" (Dipaola, 2013, p. 67). As such, the becoming of the flows – that dynamic flow of the insistences and differences in the current space – implies that, imminently, forms of normativity are recorded that express multiples by giving way to formations and inscriptions of identities (Dipaola, 2013). Thus, understanding this multiple becoming of flows allows a conception of the city as an artifact assembled by way of various mechanisms (Garcia, 2018). On this basis, the reconfigurations that cities undergo are elucidated with the incorporation of certain patterns of global consumption that regulate the "channelization" of these transits of images, social ties, urban experiences, and specific practices. To this end, next we will turn to the **museification of the city**, following Agamben (2013) and Huyssen (2002).

The **museification of the city** refers to a process by which the spiritual powers that defined humans' lives – art, religion, philosophy, the idea of nature, and even politics – have docilely withdrawn one by one into the Museum, this being understood not as a given physical space or place, but the separate dimension to which what used to be perceived as **true** and **decisive**, but which no longer is, is transferred (Agamben, 2013). That is, according to this Italian philosopher, the museification of the city is a "consecration of spaces" that entails the setting aside of certain places as "areas worth visiting." Through this operation, the space's collective vitality is captured and deposited within a standardized framework of commercial consumption; such spaces become part of the chain of urban experiences thought suitable to be "transited" by tourists. As such, Agamben considers tourism to be the global industry by which everything can become a Museum, allowing people "to carry out in their own flesh what is perhaps the most desperate experience that one can have: the irrevocable loss of all use, the absolute impossibility of **profaning**" (Agamben, 2007, p. 85). However, this process is by no means homogeneous or regular but, on the contrary, plagued by paradoxes that are characterized by the latent tension between the global standardization of the landscape and local tourist configurations. Analyzing this tension means analyzing the revaluation of heritage, the restructuring of emblematic places, and the logic of dissemination of cultural centers and museums.

Now, when the logic of dissemination by cultural centers and museums as "privileged cultural agents" is exploited, we come up against unresolved cultural negotiation, and these agents become institutional centers for disputing the discursivities that interweave the history of a community, creating a solid structure upon which a commercial economic venture is designed to profit from the public space in tension. Thus, as Huyssen (2002) puts it lucidly, museums and cultural centers have mutated from being conceived as elitist places of conservation and bastions of tradition and high culture, and tending toward a mass medium with a framework of operatic exuberance and spectacularization presented in paradoxical terms (Bourdieu, 2004). One can glimpse interesting aspects in terms of artistic linkage and critical potential in this mass democratization. Museums and cultural centers involve the spectacularity vertiginously assumed by the atmosphere of consumption and the entertainment industry, to trade in contemplation in a marathon act of overlapping works and representations of **art**. Huyssen (2002) approaches the notion of **museification** as a dynamic aporetic process of restructuring emblematic places around new exhibition practices that correspond to a transformation of public expectations (Maffesoli, 2007) – public expectations that are consistent with the aforementioned reticular forms since they refer of the spatial and temporal perception of the culture of consumption and the changing status of memory, in which **displacement** allows for an opening to spaces of critical reflection (Huyssen, 2002).

Returning to the "impossibility of profaning" and continuing with the restructuring of emblematic places, we frame our discussion around Marc Augé's (2008) conception of **non-places** as epicenters of **anonymity** in which the conception of the citizen changes, interpellated as a consumer and prevailing within these provisional and vertiginous spaces with the sole purpose of delivering a voracious and financial capitalism: **consumption**. Augé tackles the idea of place as a space in which the organic social bond inherent to classical anthropological study was formed by way of processes of identification and subjectivation. This idea is opposed by those spaces (shopping malls, terminals airports, etc.) in which subjects dissolve their identity, decoupling themselves from their history and meanings to plunge into an atmosphere more propitious for consumption and embracing the market. In turn, both Dipaola (2013 and Mongin (2006) refute this vision, contending that if social normativity has become malleable – inducing a plasticity in the identity dynamic of communities – it will therefore be understood that the space also responds to that flexibility; this does not mean subscribing to the idea of "non-places" but rather thinking about a

multidimensionality and plurality of space (Dipaola, 2013), that is, a space as **becoming** and a contemporary city formed "from flows."

In this way, the vertiginous panorama of contemporary cities presents itself as a comprehensive platform that encompasses **non-places** within a "greater urban synergy" linked to the mutation of social practices, the encroachment of new technologies, and the circulation of information, which energizes the multiple and hybrid interactions that make up the social bond and the urban space. That is, the city as artifact favors the experience of a complete technology that not only produces the multiple becoming of the urban – the disposition of its transits according to given experiences and exercises, flexibility in its uses and specifications of meanings, the unfolding of its flows, commodities, fashions, consumptions – but is also conducive to the administration of it all, with the logic of presenting itself as a great technology of codification of dispersions. In other words, this status as artifact presents itself as the administration and management of the immanent becoming – of its flows and transits – of the urban in global capitalism[9] (Dipaola, 2013).

Conclusion

In sum, by assuming the advent of the contemporary city enveloped in a complex production apparatus and connecting it with "the oiled mechanisms of tourism as offers of a nomadic utopia of consumption and unlimited accessibility to a domestically exotic world" (Longoni, 2010, P. 121), the following Bourrieudian questions arise: what is to be done if global capitalism appears to have seized the flows, the velocity, and the nomadism? Should one submit, forcibly, to hailing stagnation as an ideal, arguing that flexibility dominates the world imaginary? By no means should this to be answered in the affirmative. Bourriaud (2009) suggests that we should become "even more mobile." No longer will rigid or nostalgic postures suffice to oppose cognitive capitalism; rather, what is needed is an **incessant exercise in continuous decentering** – and the alteration of the administration and management of urban becoming – to help appreciate the extent to which changes affect the capacity for urban creation and organization. In this way, it is understood that through the mapping of cognitive capitalism the **museification of the city** can be seen as an incessant touristic process that seeks to standardize the image, flows, and trajectories of the city and, in this way, resolves into

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9   To further explore the intersection between the flows and transits that comprise the city and the weakening of social ties, see *Comunidad impropia. Estéticas posmodernas del lazo social* by Esteban Dipaola (2013).

a culture of consumption that fluctuates between an obstruction of local configurations and an articulation of the desire to preserve the public space.

The task of criticism will involve diagnosing the structural deficiencies of this approach and imagining future societies as complex and diverse – defending **inclusive** models of cities and territories – starting from a reinscription in the lineage of tourism as a social right that was acquired and won, and the establishment of urban spaces that are sufficiently permeable to accommodate multiple and varied uses in both collective and individual terms. The premise here is to awaken public interest in the **democratization** of space by contrasting the urban condition – in terms of the artifact of managing and administrating becoming in global capitalism – with public spaces understood as **encounter**, since it is there that the City is composed, converges and communicates (Nancy, 2013). This enables an understanding of **profanation** as an operation of **displacement** that restores the "use" of public space "to common men." A use that contributes to the tension of the sacred-profane, enunciated in the focus of the tourist genealogy; an "opening" allowing us to glimpse a "revitalizing alternative" that contemplates multipolarity and the contemporary reticular hybridization by channeling critical-reflexive meeting spaces.

Now, the critical potential of this analysis lies in establishing nomadic thinking that organizes itself in terms of circuits and experimentation: a kind of thinking that will allow us to **map cognitive capitalism to mitigate the museification of the city**, incorporating both spatial and temporal dimensions in this reflection. This begins with the prerogative of **profaning** cities by **displacing** commercial centrality through a political interrogation that reconfigures spaces for the "common use of men," making them habitable and favorable again to experience (Agamben, 2007), or, failing that, to **locate us** – geographically and historically – through collective experiences that mark out alternative paths in an attempt to mitigate the impact to which our subjectivities are subjected.

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