I AM EXPORTED

"The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed,"[1] of the imported and of the exported.

- Michel Foucault

Described by Foucault in the Of Other Spaces; our physical and psychological experience of the world has transformed to stand, no longer; entirely dependent on life evolving through time but of a network that links points and intersects with its own tangle. The spaces of our lives are rather constituted from the particular dynamics of a mixture of factors from which the places, their location, significance, expansion, their degree of effectiveness, all appear differently in each case. This network of connections between vastly contrasting places allows the importation of the other place.

Over the last 40 years, fundamental shifts have taken place for knowledge and the space of architectural practice. The World Wide Web for example, has shifted the way we conceive space as driven by the new media. A new space that does not take place in the outside world, nor does it in the inside world; rather, it is a space of psychological structures enacted in the world of cyber networks, a place for the storage of interactions, and a place for the communication of data and information, information that alters the way we create and perceive space.

"This is a world of less rigid, more fluid and flexible relationships — of knowledge to action, of shape to materials, and of people to places."[2] The cyber space as a tool for importing and exporting culture, thoughts, and ideologies has created a boundless space of electronic interconnectivity and interdependence with a complex network of relationships that sees to break down the traditional domain of architectural boundaries. The moral boundaries are also translated to reveal a stable framework of connections which are overlapping or shared link networks of interwoven demands and responses that regulate the degree of freedom or constraint. This ability to see and interact with different other places is having a phenomenal effect on the way we perceive, experience, and create our surroundings. In a way; I am exporting my presence, ideologies, and language and ones back; importing new ideas and perception of the other place contamination the way I perceive, interact, and create.

1   Michel Foucault, Of Other Spaces, In Roland Ritter, Other Spaces; the Affair of the heterotopia, Graz, HAD Dokumente zur Architectur; 10, 1998, p 23

2   William J. Mitchell, Me++ The Cyborg self and the network city, Cambridge, MIT press, 2003, p5

Figure. 1: I am exported, view from within ShanXiaJiu Plaza. (Photography by Author, 2011)

What am I exporting, and what am I importing when interacting with other places? The Normative I dimension is the scale of the individual; personal space, thoughts, point of view, memories, and the immediate atmosphere, all that modifies and renders the surrounding within the mind at any one time. The name Normative I; is a derivative of the individualized character of the 21st century, where the perspective of the world, its media and cooperation's have all been focused towards the individual. "I" can be compared with the 'noble savage' described by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter in Collage City. They describe, in order to find a space of society; a successful analysis needs man at thestarting point, "man must be stripped of his cultural contamination and social corruptions. He must be imagined in his aboriginal condition, placed at point zero, before Temptation, before the Fall."[3] However, it is the imperfection of man, his thoughts, identity, and culture that renders consciousness; in order to understand the space of society one must understand the society, their memories, thoughts, and way of living. The Normative I is all these layers that affect the mentality of an individual in an urban field.

How is this exportation and importation of thought, mentality, and culture affecting the urban realm? An urban field can be seen as a thinking brain, individuals living or moving within this field; leaving trails are synaptic potentials and the trail travelled can be seen as neurons, and the interaction between two individuals can be a synapse. For the clarity of this explanation let's call the memories, culture, and thoughts which can be exported or imported of one individual within this urban field; a cell, a spacious cloud of ideologies that surrounds an individual. This expresses; that each individual transforms the space of its surrounding, simple by thinking, talking, or interacting. When individuals come together in an urban field they subconsciously create a collection of cellular network spaces and events that create and manipulate the fabric of space, the power, size, and the strength of the feedback within each cell defines that place/space in time. The interconnected network of cells are held together by short range connections and relationships yet defined with their own unique character, creating an eventuality; where in a particular instant most cells can be corresponding to an event. Feedback loops of the shifting technological advances in a social economy; visible in swarms of mobile vehicles and SIM cards, connecting actors within each cell with the world beyond their line of sight. "It is a world …, in which networks propagate the effects of our actions far beyond traditional boundaries."[4]

On the other hand, the cultural dimension is also woven into the fabric of the topography; interacting with the cellular scale of the urban area, yet it's defined within its own larger scale of cultural clusters, when a cell interacts with another culture or way of perceiving space; it contaminates that other place and also imports contamination from that place into the cultural cluster. This contamination is in most cases advantages for the culture as it introduces a new pigment; adding to the complexity of the culture. Performing very similar to the cellular network spaces, cultural clusters manipulate and transform the surrounding to represent the ideologies of a particular culture. The cluster works as a collective of individual cells that are comprised of spaces and moments in places in time. These moments are defined by the people and the spaces they create around themselves, their territoriality, perception of beauty, and language. Thus a cluster of these cells with similar ideas and cultures; creates the cultural clusters, cells and the overall cluster can be an eventual re-presentation of a different place, an enclave with an internal coherence that references the distant location reinforcing the idea of the cellular net; beyond the immediate surroundings, such as the territorial enclaves visible in cities today— China town, little Italy, an army base, Indian town— all are cultural clusters imported with network of references to an origin; an calved heterotopias.

Information in one's immediate surrounding affects social behaviour, performance, emotion, and aesthetic satisfaction. Just as a thought or culture can be imported/ exported through todays media and technology, a public realm can be contaminated by imported signs, logos, and colours of another place. ShanXiaJiu Plaza is a space where signs and logos define the place; it can be seen as a machine to serve individuals eyes, constantly in motion; signs, events, and interactions produce a continuously changing environment. The public realm is a show at play, places and spaces are therefore the theatre of this play, and an individual is the Normative I that defines the character and atmosphere of the space. The traditional 'space of place' is oriented with our ordinary and social experience of the surrounding, relating to the idea of proximity to the interactions of the place. However; "all these dimensions of information—rate or density, legibility, congruence, rootedness—can be evaluated without passing on the content of the message,"[5] therefore an Import can subconsciously alter and transform the play.

3   Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, Collage City. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), 16.
4   William J Mitchell, Me++; The Cyborg Self And The Networked City. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 5.

5   Kevin Lynch, Managing the Sense of a Region MIT press 1976, 31

Foucault described in one of the principles of a heterotopia; the illusional aspect of the cemetery, the brothel, and the garden, Kabukichō district also meets that description; driven by the signs, images, and logos. The present 'love hotels' in Kabukichō are a very different picture to the old Yoshiwara; which was destroyed during the last year of the war, Yoshiwara was a social space in the city, today the 'love hotels' have reduced that space into a private room rented per hour. However the atmosphere of the district still renders a different reality; one in which does not exist in one's life, it is an imported reality that you go to distance yourself from the one you occupy. The movie "Enter the Void" reveals the bright lights and the unreal, illusional aspects of Kabukichō, the Normative I perception of these sites are far more complex than a normal urban site, Atmosphere and character of a space cannot be measured; yet it can be exported, the colours, cultures, points of view can be investigated to reveal the quality or the essence of a place.
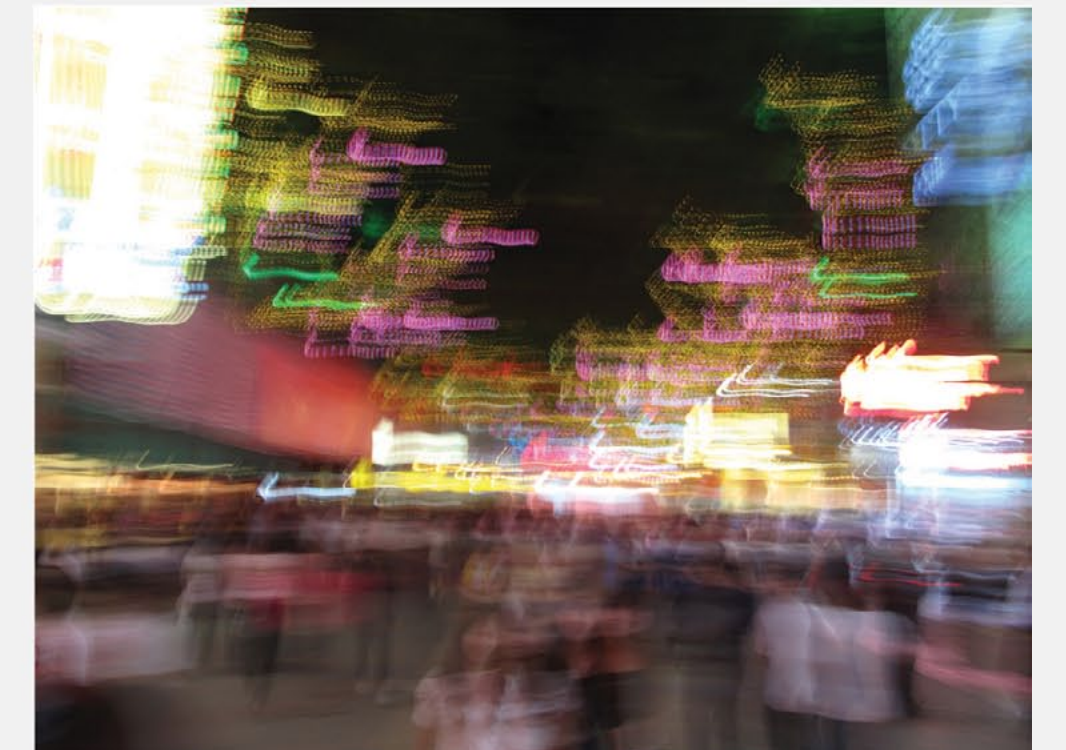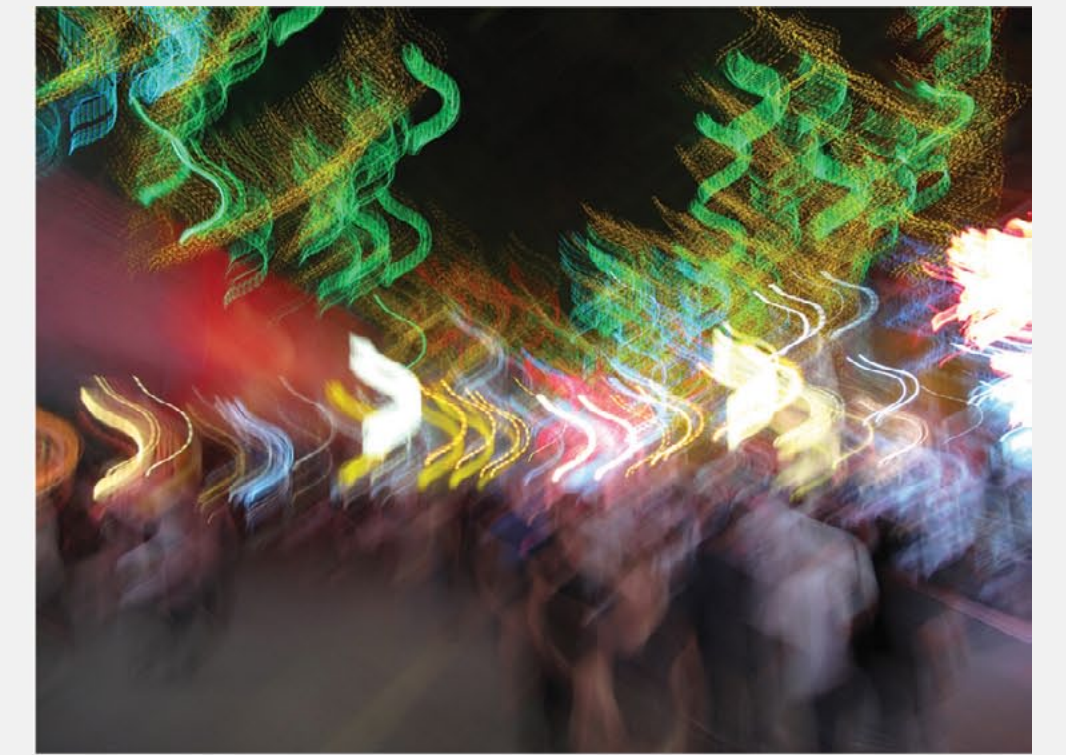

Figure. 2: I am exported, view from within ShanXiaJiu Plaza. (Photography by Author, 2011)

The Normative I of the 21st Century is defined where 'I' is no longer in one place at one time, the technological advancements of the 21st century has allowed individuals to expand their personal space to a global size. The advancements of this century have allowed the geographical space to shrink; our ordering of the special relation has undergone an evolutionary mutation. Where the 'I' in the Normative I is no longer the Vitruvius man closed within a perfect circle, viewing the world from one personal perspective and providing the perfect measure of all, but rather a physical entirety that occupies space in the stretching fabric of time without boundaries, but rather it is constantly in the state of export and import transforming and contaminating the surrounding, it is all cultures, ideologies, and perspectives without one meaning of the golden rule and the measure of all thing, and as a technological entirety within different worlds at different places, a 'cyborg' in the image of 'I' in the world of information exported and imported.

The results in a heterotopias space that provides diversity, a dream of freedom and infinite choice, it's multicellular structure, flexibility, and its competency to combined diverse elements and desires, makes it the ideal tool for actors seeking a sense of freedom. An imported thought, image, ideology from another place is a heterotopias element; disjointed from its origin. A phenomena which occurs as a process of sudden purloining, stolen from a place that is created for something else in the other spaces; they formulate the other side of space, objects, places.

"I" am not one place, one space, or a dimension. Nor am I a self-sufficient, autonomous, biologically contained space, objectifying, encountering, and responding to the immediate surroundings. 'I construct and I am constructed' in a space of transition at a point of extreme tension in mutual balance that constantly engages with my sense of reality, permeable boundaries, and my endless networks. I am the imported and the exported; constantly contaminating all places at all time; I am the meaning of another place, the sign you cannot read, the language you cannot understand, the image you cannot comprehend.