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The abstraction of status in the experience of time and space: The movie in time

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between the time-space experience and social status through the movie In Time, directed by Andrew Niccol and critically examines the basic dynamics of the time-space compression that urban people experience in their daily lives. In the movie, time is transformed from a mere biological phenomenon into a currency and becomes the main element that determines the place of individuals in the social hierarchy. The study analyzes how urban space is shaped within this time-based economy, the restrictions on individuals' spatial mobility, and the abstraction of social layers through cinematographic signs. The study aims to reveal the critique of the modern capitalist system using time as a tool of power and cinematographic representations of spatial segregation through the relationship between body and space. Due to the scope of the study, firstly the theoretical issues of time-space experience, body-space relationship and time-space compression are discussed theoretically. Then, through the cinematographic space, the theoretical framework is opened to a visually perceptible description. Finally, the life motion and daily rhythm of urban individuals are examined through these evaluations, and the fundamental dynamics of time-space compression are analyzed in the context of social role, space, and status.

Statünün zaman mekân deneyimince soyutlanması: Zamana karşı filmi

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Andrew Niccol'un yönettiği Zamana Karşı filmi üzerinden zaman-mekân deneyimi ile toplumsal statü arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemekte ve kentli insanın gündelik yaşamında deneyimlediği zaman-mekân sıkışmasının temel dinamiklerini irdelemektedir. Filmde zaman, salt biyolojik bir olgu olmaktan çıkıp bir para birimine dönüşmekte ve bireylerin toplumsal hiyerarşideki yerini belirleyen ana unsur haline gelmektedir. Çalışmada film üzerinden, kentsel mekânın bu zamana dayalı ekonomi çerçevesinde nasıl şekillendiği, bireylerin mekânsal hareketliliğinin nasıl kısıtlandığı ve toplumsal katmanların sinematografik göstergeler aracılığıyla nasıl soyutlandığı analiz edilmektedir. Çalışma, zamanın bir iktidar aracı olarak kullanılması ve mekânsal ayrışmanın sinematografik temsilleri aracılığıyla modern kapitalist sistemin eleştirisini, beden ve mekân arasındaki ilişki üzerinden ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın kapsamı dolayısıyla öncelikle zaman mekân deneyimi, beden mekân ilişkisi ve zaman mekân sıkışması konuları teorik olarak ele alınmaktadır. Ardından sinematografik mekân üzerinden teorik çerçeve görsel düzeyde algılanabilir bir tariflemeye açılmaktadır. Son olarak kentli insanın yaşam devrimi ve gündelik ritmi bu değerlendirmelerle irdelenerek zaman mekân sıkışmasının temel dinamikleri, toplumsal rol, mekân ve statü bağlamında incelenmektedir.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Time and space are the basic components of social life and play a decisive role in many elements ranging from the daily practices of individuals to their socio-economic status [9]. In modern societies, time has ceased to be a part of individual experiences and has become an economic and political variable, while space has been reshaped as a reflection of class segregation [16]. Especially in the capitalist system accelerated by globalisation, the commodification of time and the organisation of space according to socio-economic hierarchy have become increasingly evident [3].

In this context, the movie *In Time* [19], directed by Andrew Niccol, presents a dystopian world in which time functions directly as an economic variable and addresses this relationship on a cinematographic plane with an artistic expression. In the movie, time is constructed as a fundamental element that determines the social status of individuals rather than a biological reality. While urban space is shaped as a spatial projection of time-based class segregation, the mobility of individuals and their access to space are directly related to the amount of time they have [6]. This coincides with the concept of “time-space compression” put forward by David Harvey [10], which is a criticism of today's global capitalist order. The condensation of time in space reveals how the bodily existence of individuals is shaped by class and social conditions, while at the same time deepening the existential experiences of individuals through the relationship of space to time [17]. In this setting, space is a dynamic structure where social relations and time are intertwined, limiting the freedom and bodies of individuals [22]. This kind of space-meaning relationship points to an environment where social inequalities are reproduced, and bodily imprisonment is created.

The main purpose of this study is to analyse how time functions as a determinant of social status and how urban space is shaped in this context through the cinematographic narrative elements of the movie *In Time*, and to open the basic dynamics of the time-space compression that urban people experience in their daily lives to criticism. By using cinematographic signs in the movie (colour palette, space design, character movements, framing choices, etc.), it is analysed how social hierarchy is abstracted and how spatial segregation is cinematographically produced. Within this approach, answers to the following questions are sought: How is time constructed as an element determining social status in the movie? How does the shaping of urban space reflect the use of time as an economic variable? How is social segregation visualised through cinematographic signs (use of space, framing, colour palette, etc.)? How does the movie criticise the impact of the modern capitalist system on time and space?

The study analyses the spatial and temporal construction of the movie using visual text analysis method. Within the scope of the study, an evaluation is made in the context of Lefebvre's theory of space, Harvey's concept of time-space compression and cinematographic narrative techniques. By analysing the main scenes of the movie in detail, it is analysed how time and space are used in the production of social status. While dystopian movies are usually evaluated through ideological criticisms or social structures in the literature, the unique aspect of this study lies in its examination of time as an economic variable and its reflection in spatial segregation through cinematographic techniques.

In addition to the issues, the study is a part of the effort made in the context of Lefebvre's critique of everyday life, which Lefebvre considers indispensable for human life. Another unique aspect of the study is to define the reflections of the temporal exploitation of the labour power of urban people in the urban space, and in this context, to question the human and exploitative dimensions of the body-space relationship in the field of daily movement. Moreover, since the criticism of everyday life is made through an artistic expression, the research is carried out on a single movie and contributes to the literature within the framework of urban sociology, spatial theories, movie analysis and criticism of life.

2. EVERYDAY PERSON'S BEING STUCK IN TIME: THE EXPERIENCE OF TIME AND SPACE

Time and space are fundamental elements of human life and are the main categories that shape the existential experiences of individuals. These two concepts are deeply connected with human interactions on both material and cognitive levels. However, how these concepts are experienced in the historical process has undergone a significant transformation, especially with the rise of modernity. Accelerated production and reproduction processes since the Industrial Revolution, along with revolutionary developments in transportation and communication technologies, have radically restructured perceptions of time and space. As sociologists such as Harvey [9] point out, this transformation has caused time and space to become flexible and fluid, and space is now a mental construct.

Different communities have experienced time and space according to their own modes of production, reproduction and cultural norms. In traditional societies, time was cyclical in harmony with the rhythms of nature and agricultural cycles, whereas with the

industrialisation process, time took on a linear and measurable form (this is where the transformation of time into a commodity begins). As Thompson [23] points out, while in medieval societies time was perceived as a natural process determined by the movements of the sun, with the industrial revolution, the organisation of factory clocks made it necessary to consider time in a mechanical framework. This also changed the perception of space. While space in traditional societies had a deep connection with community relations and feelings of belonging, space in modern society has turned into a more abstract organizing tool. Lefebvre [17] defines this transformation as a process in which, with the rise of nation-states and the spread of global capitalism, space ceased to reflect a social structure and became an abstract tool. Today, with the impact of digital technologies, the physical boundaries of space are becoming increasingly blurred and virtual spaces are reshaping individuals' perception of space [6].

Time-space compression is an important phenomenon conceptualised by David Harvey [10] and emerged with the acceleration of capitalist production relations. This process has radically transformed the temporal and spatial perceptions of individuals and defines a situation in which spatial distances become increasingly meaningless, and time accelerates, especially with globalisation. Harvey stated that the mobility of capital has increased with the effect of globalisation, and that time has accelerated with the development of transportation and communication networks. Space has been compressed and restructured, and geographical distances have become insignificant. This transformation has become more evident with the spread of digital technologies and the internet. The emergence of the culture of 'instant access' over the Internet, the 24-hour activity of global trade and new forms of life such as remote working have caused time to become more compressed and space to become more flexible [24]. However, this process has not only economic and technological effects, but also cultural and social effects. Thanks to fast transport facilities, individuals can access different cultural spaces more easily and develop multiple identities. Yet, this multicultural interaction also contributes to a process of alienation, weakening individuals' sense of belonging [18].

Time-space compression has significant psychological and social effects on individuals. Especially with the influence of the culture of speed, individuals feel the necessity to "keep up" and "stay connected", which leads to the spread of psychological problems such as burnout syndrome [20]. In the social context, the acceleration of time and the compression of space (due to physical capabilities) have also reshaped community relations. With the increase in digital interactions, face-to-face communication is decreasing and this is a factor that increases anonymisation, especially in big cities [3]. In an age where time is accelerating, social memory is also affected. In this period when information is rapidly produced and consumed, historical contexts are blurred and collective memory is fragmented [1]. With this situation, the individual's connection to social memory weakens and a temporary, disappearing understanding of culture emerges.

Urban space has been shaped as a reflection of social structures, economic systems and political ideologies in the historical process. In this process from ancient cities to modern metropolises, the organisation of space has not only made the status differences between individuals visible but also contributed to the reproduction of these differences. Henri Lefebvre, who examined the impact of capitalist production relations on urban space, argued that space is a dynamic organisation constructed because of social relations [17]. In this context, the relationship between urban space and individual status is important for understanding the spatial projections of social class differentiation.

In modern cities, spatial segregation is seen as one of the important factors determining socio-economic status. According to David Harvey [12], the capitalist urbanisation process promotes the spatial accumulation of capital and deepens social inequalities. While the upper classes generally live in areas with prestigious housing areas and high living standards, the lower classes are concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods. While this situation appears to be a segregation based on economic capital, it reveals a hierarchy in which cultural and social capital is also determinant [4]. Thus, urban space functions as a physical representation of social status.

The function of urban space as a status determining element is directly related to the mobility of individuals and their access to space. According to Manuel Castells [6], spatial organisation in the network society is differentiated according to individuals' economic power and technological access possibilities. Especially with the impact of neoliberal policies, the privatisation of public spaces and the regulation of access opportunities in the city according to market dynamics restrict the spatial mobility of lower income groups and reinforce social segregation [11]. This means that status in urban space is abstracted through spatial formations: The space determines the spatial practices and social roles of the individual within its own images and spatial organisations.

In conclusion, the relationship between urban space and status is directly linked to the capitalist mode of production. Cities function both as a sign of social status and as a means of reproduction, thereby enforcing inequalities between individuals. The commodification of space makes the physical and symbolic dimensions of social stratification more apparent and directly links the mobility of individuals within the city with economic capital.

3. METHODOLOGY

In the study, semiotic analysis and spatial discourse analysis methods are used to analyse the movie *In Time*. The analysis is constructed within the framework of a qualitative method and focuses on analysing the role of space in the construction of status through cinematographic space. Cinematographic images are selected from scenes where the ways in which space is associated with status can be clearly seen. The selection process is based on criteria such as the prominence of spatial configuration, the presence of scenes emphasising the time-space relationship and the presence of narratives representing socio-spatial segregation. In addition, factors such as the direct symbolism of social status, the characters being in different spaces according to their social status and emphasising the differences between elite and peripheral spaces are also taken into consideration.

The analysis process is carried out with a two-stage methodology. In the first stage, based on Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the spatial signs in the scenes are identified and categorised. In line with the visual and narrative elements, factors such as light, architecture, objects and frame layout are analysed in the context of spatial segregation. In the second stage, spatial discourse analysis is applied, and it is analysed how the spaces in the movies are constructed, what meanings are attributed to them and how they determine the status of the characters. In this context, the use of space as a status sign is analysed on three main axes: Class distinction of space: Differences between rich and poor spaces, public and private space distinctions; Time-space interaction: Spatial reflections of the changing status of characters; The effect of space on social hierarchy: How certain spaces are identified with social status. This process of analysis allows for a systematic analysis of the visual and spatial elements of the movie.

Criteria for Selection of Images: Images were selected according to the following criteria: The clarity of the spatial fiction; emphasising the time-space relationship; representing socio-spatial segregation; symbolising the status of the space; showing the differences between elite and peripheral space; the use of space according to the status of the characters. Within the framework of these criteria, 6 visuals were identified for the Ghetto and Greenwich districts.

Originality and Contribution of the Method: The combination of semiotic and spatial discourse analyses systematically analyses the visual and spatial construction of the film. Visual selection criteria support the themes. The method offers an interdisciplinary contribution to urban sociology, spatial theories and film analysis.

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF TIME-SPACE IN THE MOVIE IN TIME

4.1. Synopsis of The Movie

The 2011 US movie *In Time* is set in a dystopian universe centred on a time-based economic system. In this world, people genetically age until the age of 25 and the physical reflections of time stop. However, time is needed to survive afterwards. In this system where time is used instead of money, individuals gain time by working, trading or taking it from others. While the rich live an almost immortal life, the poor are in danger of running out of time at any moment.

Will Salas, the main character of the movie, decides to fight against the injustice of the system after losing his mother to timelessness. After unexpectedly inheriting a vast amount of time from a man with centuries to spare, Will becomes a target of the Guardians of Time, who seek to prevent the system's collapse. Will infiltrates the wealthy neighbourhood of New Greenwich, where he meets Sylvia Weis, a wealthy heiress, and embarks on a great struggle to expose the distortions of the system and ensure the fair distribution of time.

4.2. Hierarchical Construction of Urban Spaces in The Movie

In the movie, time is used as a currency and people's life span is directly determined by their economic power. This system leads to a sharp hierarchical structure of the urban space. Districts inhabited by different economic classes physically embody time-based class distinctions. Although the movie is set in Los Angeles, in its fictional world the city is divided into segregated spaces called "time zones". This territorial division is marked by clear boundaries that emphasise class differences.

The city which the movie shows is basically depicted with two main extreme regions and the transition points between these regions: 'Ghetto' where the lower income group lives and "New Greenwich" where the upper income group lives. Each zone offers facilities and living standards commensurate with the amount of time individuals possess. Firstly, the lower Ghetto and then New Greenwich are spatially analysed.

The ghetto (Dayton District) has been shaped as the living space of the poorest part of the society, as time has become the most valuable and limited resource. This area has a spatially gloomy, cramped and irregular structure and is one of the areas where social inequality is felt most acutely. The spatial form of the area is a tool that reflects the psychological conditions, social relations and the struggle for survival of the people living here. Unqualified spaces, distorted architectural facades, and unidentified urban units reflect the precarious lifestyles of the people living there (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Ghetto urban typology, min: 01.41.19, [19]

The space of the ghetto is intertwined with industrial zones (Figure 2). This area is depicted with old factory buildings, abandoned areas and narrow streets surrounded by machines. The impact of industrial activities symbolises the life of the working class in the urban space by further narrowing their living spaces. In this context, the working-class lives in a state of constant decadence and decline and only tries to survive. Studies on the living spaces of the working class in urban spaces show that such spaces socially and psychologically reflect the poverty and marginalisation of the class [11].



Figure 2. Ghetto industrial zone, min: 00.04.27, [19]

The urban fabric of the ghetto consists of narrow, labyrinthine streets. It is depicted as temporal limitation, spatial scarcity and narrowness in units of measurement. The streets symbolise the disorganisation of the settlement and the desperation of the people. Moreover, this narrow and unqualified image reflects the pressure and congestion experienced by the people, making them feel under constant threat in the context of time.

The disorganized nature of the ghetto's space is a result of both environmental factors and social structure. The buildings are old, dilapidated and often have collapsed facades or rusty metal parts (Figure 3). People living in the dilapidated buildings face the fear of death and the passing of time daily. This atmosphere of chaos shows that people are in a constant race, fearing to lose time or face the danger of death at any moment. The streets are crowded, and life is characterised by the struggle for the next second. Time is traded, people lend each other time or make deadly bargains for their time.



Figure 3. Ghetto street typology, min: 01.01.50, [19]

On the one hand, the space of the ghetto has a structure in which social ties and co-operation become obligatory. People depend on each other for survival. This dependence is much more evident due to the limitation of time and the life that can end at any moment. Time forms a network of social relations here as it is a means of payment. People are constantly interacting to accumulate time, to give time to each other. However, this interaction is mostly shaped by the survival instinct and personal interests are at the forefront.

The spatial configuration of the ghetto represents a socio-economic structure shaped by a time-based economic system. Such spaces define class inequality and social exclusion as a reflection of capitalist relations of production [17]. Life in this area concretely reflects people's struggle for survival, class inequality and the value of time. Class differences are particularly exposed through economic and spatial inequalities [11]. Meeting daily needs and accessing public services requires a huge expenditure of labour. This is a concrete indicator of social exclusion and exploitation. The fact that time and space have become a means for individuals to continue their struggle for survival is a result of the spatial effects of capitalism [21]. Spatial configuration produces a structure based on the understanding of high effort and low efficiency. This structure leads to the exploitation of individuals through their biological clocks and ensures that time is perceived as passing quickly. Thus, a relationality emerges in which time and space are intertwined with social structures [7]. The main character Will Salas exhibits fast spatial practices in the context of body-space relationship on the streets of the Ghetto. This situation leads him to a chaotic daily life through his own body. At this point, while the compression of time and space is shown through body movements in the expression of the film, the main character's individual conflict in the context of time is shaped spatially. Moreover, the other side characters experience the space in Ghetto in the same way, exhibiting a drama of time-space compression with human contradictions.

In a world where time has become the most valuable and limited resource, the New Greenwich neighbourhood was designed as the living space of the rich. Spatially, this area is designed as a settlement where elegance and order reign, embodying the luxurious and comfortable life of the upper class. Filled with wide avenues, large skyscrapers and luxurious mansions, New Greenwich is presented as a utopia, but this utopia is a space defined only by the abundance of time and deepening social inequality (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Urban typology of the New Greenwich area, min: 00.25.35, [19]

The spatial form of New Greenwich is shaped by wide, regular and spacious streets. Here, space becomes a representation of abundance and wealth. The avenues allow residents to walk comfortably without hurrying. Time is perceived slowly, the body is not hurried or agitated in spatial practices and there is no perception of chaos. This is expressed more clearly in the early days of the main character, Will Salas, when he first arrives in New Greenwich. Will tries to maintain the fast and functional spatial practices he is used to. He wants to carry his lower-class habits, where time is a scarce resource that needs to be consumed, to the new place. However, he has difficulty in adapting to the space he is in, contrasting with the stasis around him. This slow time-space experience also manifests itself in the vertical shaping of the space. Time is not a problem in daily life, it allows mobility in high-rise buildings. Moreover, skyscrapers rising on both sides of the streets stand out as symbols of modern architecture. These buildings are expressed as an indicator of masculine power in their own architectural style ideology. High-rise buildings draw attention to the inaccessibility of life in this region and how difficult it is to have a life that is envied from the outside.

Houses in New Greenwich are symbols of elegance and luxury (Figure 5). Extremely spacious and comfortable mansions are representations of wealth and abundance of time. This is a place where time has become a privilege rather than a concern, where time is used as an insignificant toy for people. In these mansions, there is no concern for saving time; the rich can spend all their time as they wish. Luxury is felt at every moment, not only in the living spaces but also in the daily lives of the people living here. The architectural style is neoclassical. Neoclassical architecture is the most used architectural style in addition to glass and steel structures in dystopian movies because it is on a human scale [13]. Due to its eclectic structure, both the fictionalisation of the story and its temporal narrative contain a reproduced fiction in itself [15]. In addition, due to its neoclassical architecture, especially the residences in the film are extremely regular and symmetrical and offer their residents a sense of comfort with a serene narrative and prestige due to their majesty.



Figure 5. New Greenwich housing typology, min: 00.45.38, [19]

In stark contrast to Dayton, New Greenwich has an orderly, aesthetically pleasing urban design (Figure 6). Everything in the city also symbolises a psychological order. Its inhabitants are not concerned with survival; time is enough for them in every respect. This order is a kind of mechanical utopia, where everything works perfectly, just like in other regions. People here do not race In Time, do not rush, and spend their lives more as an experience. Although immortality is not defined, it is a sign of status as a quality of people with long lifespans.



Figure 6. New Greenwich workplace typology, min:01.29.24, [19]

The architecture of New Greenwich functions as an allegory of modern capitalism. Skyscrapers, wide avenues and luxurious mansions are visual symbols of the abundance of time and class privileges. Capitalist societies construct the visual organisation of spaces as a signifier of the consumption of time and capital. Such spaces are places where wealth and time merge, and where status and wealth are linked to how time is used [3 - 14]. In capitalist society, time, like money, becomes a status symbol. The distribution and access to time leads to significant gaps between social classes and the value of time becomes linked exclusively to economic power. This phenomenon shows that time functions as a social tool and defines class differences as part of the capitalist system [5 - 2]. In capitalist society, spaces are also loaded with economic, cultural and social meanings [11]. Within this constructed system, the body acquires a role by participating in the movement of life and assumes its own status.

In the movie, urban space is a part of the control mechanism of the system. Time zones, defined as economic segregation, also shape the daily movements and psychology of individuals. In this context, the time-space experience of the individual is shaped through spatial practices and communities are differentiated from each other according to their qualities. The hierarchical order limits the mobility and socio-cultural interactions of individuals. This situation appears as a spatial representation of the criticism of capitalism

emphasised in the movie. While the inhabitants of Dayton are constantly struggling to save time, the inhabitants of New Greenwich see time as a status sign. The objects surrounding them are determined by the time they have. In the dialectical relationship between man and space, this situation evokes Michel Foucault's [8] concept of 'the impact of space on power'; the urban fabric becomes an instrument of control that determines the lives of individuals.

5. CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

Time and space are fundamental concepts for social structures and individual experiences. The movie *In Time* depicts how these concepts are intertwined with social status and how time functions as an economic variable through the fiction of space. In the movie, time is transformed from a biological phenomenon into a commodity and becomes a fundamental tool that determines the social status of individuals. This situation reveals how time-based economic classifications are shaped in relation to space and how social hierarchy is abstracted through cinematographic signs.

In the spatial construction of the film, the Ghetto (Dayton District) and New Greenwich districts are shaped with a sharp contrast in terms of time-space experience. In Dayton, time is a resource that is constantly depleted, diminishing with every movement of the individual, while spatial practices are based on fast, functional and compulsory movements. In New Greenwich, on the other hand, time is experienced as an unlimited capital. The movements of individuals in space have slowed down, and their body language and rhythms have become refined in a way that makes the abundance of time visible. Spatial status differences are imposed on bodies through the way time is perceived, reflecting a clear class segregation in both urban space and individual experience. While the limited mobility of the body and the daily speed cause time-space compression in Dayton, New Greenwich is defined as a living space where time becomes independent from space and comfort becomes arbitrary with multiple possibilities. This is an abstraction of status in the experience of time and space.

This study makes a conceptual contribution within the framework of urban sociology, spatial theories, movie analysis and criticism of everyday life by examining the relationship between the ways in which time and space are experienced and the socio-economic structures of societies through a dystopian cinema example. The cinematographic analysis, which shows how the visual elements and cinematographic choices in the movie emphasise the effects of time-space experience on social status and spatial segregation, enables a better understanding of the impact of modern capitalist societies on individuals. While spatial configuration determines the status of the individual, life in the context of individual choices contains the potentials of its multiple possibilities. The spaces in the movie *In Time* define people's movements through their bodies in space and determine their perception of time. The fast perception and slow perception of time are represented as integrated with the urban space.

The dystopian setting of the movie offers a sharp criticism of the current world order. The use of time as an economic value can be read as a metaphor for today's capitalism. Today, urban people must sell their time and work to survive. By presenting this order more clearly and harshly, the movie reveals the deep distinction between the consumption of labour and the accumulation of capital. The body-space relationship in the movie is an integral part of this criticism. While people living in the lower income group areas physically feel the absence of time in their every movement, in the upper income group areas they move with the comfort of this unlimited resource and display their wealth and status. In cities, on the other hand, urban space and time experiences, social roles and the alienation of the individual come into existence through the transformation of the human body and time into objects of consumption due to capital. Human beings participate in the daily dynamics of life and are exploited through their needs in a system that is taken for granted.

In conclusion, the movie 'In Time' offers a commentary on the function of time as an economic commodity and its reflections in the formal expression of urban space. Moreover, the relationship of time and space with social status opens an important area for the criticism of today's global capitalist system structure and raises the question that these dynamics should be examined from a broader perspective. Because, while the space in the capitalist structure is shaped by the production and consumption processes of the body it imprisons, life is minimised by turning into an object of space and becoming a tool that enables its movement.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All stages of the study were carried out by the corresponding author: literature review, determination of the article idea/content, writing of the article, and its review.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Since the study has a single author, there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICS

There is no ethical problem in the publication of this article.

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