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## Transit Mobility as a Spatial Practice: Istanbul's Metrobus *Bir Mekânsal Pratik Olarak Transit Hareketlilik: İstanbul'un Metrobüsü*

### Abstract

The article inquires the spatial practice that Istanbul's metrobus spans as a characteristic of transit mobility. As bus rapid transit, the metrobus has become a popular means of transport in Istanbul. However, the spatial practice it provides represents the problematized mode of mobility in the metropolis. Because efficiency-based quantification transforms the experience of a mobile space into transit practice. Hence, the article analyzes Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory together with the production of modern mobilities. Then, it discusses how the metrobus is comprehended as the "ultimate example" of "becoming transit." This has been a direct expression of a regular passenger during an interview that I have conducted for my ongoing doctoral thesis. Since being on the move is a social phenomenon that conceives more than functional details, the article reflects upon the interlocutor's story to question the spatial practice of the metrobus as a transit enclosure.

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### Öz

Bu makale transit hareketlilik örneği olarak metrobüsün sunduğu mekânsal pratiği sorguluyor. Metrobüs, İstanbul'un en popüler ulaşım araçlarından biri haline gelmesine karşın, metropoldeki hareketliliğin sorunlu yapısını, ürettiği mekânsal pratik ile temsil ediyor. Çünkü sağladığı verim odaklı niceliksel çözüm, hareketli bir mekâna ait deneyimi transit bir pratiğe dönüştürüyor. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma öncelikle Henri Lefebvre'in mekân teorisini, modern hareketliliğin üretimi ile birlikte ele alıyor. Ardından, metrobüsü "transitleşmenin" "nihai örneği" olarak inceliyor. Bu tanım, devam eden doktora tez için yaptığım mülakatlarda, düzenli bir metrobüs kullanıcısı tarafından ifade edildi. Hareketlilik, fonksiyonel detaylardan fazlasını içeren sosyal bir fenomen olduğu için bu çalışma, metrobüsün sunduğu mekânsal pratiği bir transit çevreleme olarak muhatabın hikayesi üzerinden tartışıyor.

### Keywords

Lefebvre, spatial theory, mobility, metrobus, Istanbul

### Anahtar kelimeler

Lefebvre, mekân teorisi, hareketlilik, metrobüs, İstanbul

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## Introduction

In *the Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre analyzes the interconnection between spatial transformations and the mode of production. For Lefebvre, the discovery of the “new” in urban history coincides with modernity. The emergence of the conceptualized town constructed a “written form”, which extracted the experience of nature and applied it to the representations of space. Space is a social product that is lived through meaning, reaction, and interaction; however, urbanization exposed material production to conceptualizations. The proliferation of plans, models and bird’s eye views generated a built environment, an urban reality. Hence, conceptual subjection of space gradually abstracted the chances of the lived by the potency of representations of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 269; Wilson, 2013, p. 366).

This work questions Istanbul’s metrobus as an example of the conceptual representation of mobility. Since their first operation in 2007, the metrobuses maximized efficiency through speed, strategic route, and transit form. They became central to everyday mobility in Istanbul. A variety of studies have analyzed the effects of the metrobus in comparison with existing bus rapid transits, which include operative characteristics (Yurdagul & Gercek, 2012), policy aims of sustainability (Alpkokin & Ergun, 2012), planning and performance analyses (Sutcliffe-Babalik & Cengiz, 2015), and the spatio-temporal accessibility of the metrobus (Shoman & Demirel, 2020). In contrast, this work directly addresses the socio-spatial experience that metrobus constitutes in mobility. As Lefebvre put forth, the meaning of the lived significantly differs from the representation of the conceived. The built form in the city corresponds to this experience. The metrobus has been conceptualized as a functional solution for problems of traffic and time spent on the roads. Although many acknowledge its function, the metrobuses considerably homogenize the inhabitants’ experience of mobility in quantification.

In this paper, I argue that the metrobus undertakes an enclosing state in everyday mobility and that it engenders a transit mode of spatial experience. I extracted the question from an interview that I conducted for my ongoing doctoral thesis. Between 2019 to spring 2020 (i.e., until the COVID-19 quarantine was introduced), I conducted 20 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with regular metrobus passengers. I completed my field study with an additional nine online interviews from June to October 2020. All of the interlocutors emphasized the efficiency that the metrobus presented via rapid-transit journeys. However, their spatial experiences were mostly negative. The most striking point is that one interlocutor described the metrobus as the “ultimate example” of “becoming transit.” During my field study, this interlocutor was the only one who conceived metrobus directly as a transit mode of experience. This has been genuine but equally contradictory because transit-ness is the criteria of the metrobus as a bus rapid transit—its functionality became a determinant for her negated mode of mobility in Istanbul. This interlocutor correlates her everyday life with her everyday mobility and represents them together by the spatial practice that metrobus offers. She evaluates them together as consuming and isolating aspects of her life (i.e., becoming transit). Therefore, this paper will first elaborate on Lefebvre’s

spatial theory with the phenomenon of modern mobility. It will then introduce transportation in Istanbul, with an emphasis on the metrobus. Finally, it will reflect upon this interlocutor's statement to analyze the spatial practice of the metrobus as a transit enclosure.

## **Lefebvre's Social Space and Modern Mobility**

Henri Lefebvre's space lies at the center of social organization. Within a unified theory, he presents a spatial outlook for our engagement with the everyday world. To overcome mere "analytic scrutiny" that is derived from empirical-physical conceptualizations and to lay the ground for "space in its totality"; Lefebvre's theory shifts from "things in space to the actual production of space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 37). He introduces a conceptual triad and reflects upon physical perceptions, systemic conceptions, and lived experiences of space. Thus, Lefebvre's triad implies that material production of space is enmeshed with conceptual production that is proliferated in urban planning, yet space as a social product is lived through meaning. Spatial practice (perceived space) defines our everyday practices, which are reinforced by routines, the daily or urban realities. It is the material form. Representations of space (conceived space) are the instrumental space of planners, technicians, engineers, architects, and it is also the ideological, cognitive aspect of space. Representational space (lived space) defines spaces invested with symbolism and meaning, space as something both real and imagined. This concept sees space as produced through its use value and as in a state of becoming (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33; Elden, 2004, p. 190). The triad unfolds a significant path in making sense of everyday experience in the modern city. Simply put, the city comprises networks that make up the everyday in physical form. The classic example is the modern commuter's cyclical practices to and from work. Nevertheless, public mass transport in the modern city transforms and appropriates the physical form, and generates a conceptualized understanding of mobility. Thus, the cyclical practice of commuting in the modern city considerably homogenizes temporal and spatial experience of mobility and mitigates the interaction of the lived. In De Certeau's words, "space is a practiced place. Thus, the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 117). Lefebvre presents the possibilities of these practices through representational space. For this reason, it emphasizes the lived aspect with immediate reactions. Like De Certeau's example, a park is also produced through labor and planning. Although it is a material and conceptual product, the park adapts and constructs a spatial meaning through the reaction and interaction of social actors and groups.

The city as a socio-spatial structure makes up the life practices of inhabitants. As Watkins elaborates, Lefebvre "posits space as the primary locus of lived experience in the world and has conceived an approach to space, which... become the foundation of our engagement with the world" (Watkins, 2006, p. 211). For Lefebvre, spatial construction is related to the historical conditions and mode of production. Capitalist production of space is constituted in both perception and conception; both in the material and mental (Stanek, 2008, p. 65). As Lefebvre writes,

“representations of space are certainly abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practice: established relations between objects and people in represented space are subordinate to a logic” (p. 41). Because the modern city appropriates space for power, wealth, and knowledge, representations of space are enmeshed in physical plans and models. For Lefebvre, the capital represents itself in the built environment, as a physical landscape created in its own image because industrialism assailed the networks of the old cities and appropriated them to its needs. However, “spatial practice is lived directly before it is conceptualized, the primacy of the conceived over the lived causes practice to disappear along with life” (p. 34) (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 34, 41; Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 70). The disappearance of spatial practice—of life—under the conceived (i.e., representations of) space imply the functionalist organization of the “Concept-city.” For De Certeau, the Concept-city becomes “the hero of modernity” (De Certeau, 1984, pp. 95). Mobility has been an important dimension of this process because, as a central aspect of the quotidian, mobilities were also modernized in the Concept-city. Like Lefebvre’s articulation of spatial triad, mobilities research has embraced a multilayered aspect over the past decade. For a long time, the time spent on the road was assumed to be “dead time.” People considered practices of movement as functional necessities of everyday life. However, new approaches to mobilities bring social, spatial, and cultural concerns together and analyze them within a set of relations that constitute subjects, spaces and meaning. The social production of mobilities generates a ground for the spatial-temporal form, but it unfolds a realm for symbolic meaning. These methods bring a variety of possibilities showing how “various kinds of moves make social and material realities” (Sheller, 2011, pp. 1, 7).

The social production of space embraces the production of mobility because modern mobility corresponds to spatial production. Tim Cresswell discusses how mobility is central to Western modernity. In medieval Europe “the vast majority of people stayed pretty much where they were” (p. 10). The majority lacked transportation means and were mostly tied to the land. New technologies accompanied the rise of the city and the modern citizen who had “the right to move at will within the bounds of the nation-state” generated mobility. For Cresswell, the word modern in mobilities evokes the image of technologies in adjusted mobility. The emergence of the train, the car and the plane make up this image, but it also defines “a world of increased movement of people on a global scale” (Cresswell, 2006, p. 10, 15). Hence, movement is both spatial and temporal. Space and time become the context and the product of movement because the standardization of time accompanied the functional production of space. Time, like Lefebvrian space, has also been extracted from nature, from the “immediate experience,” and it was regulated as clock time. Through timetables and daily schedules, it was placed “in the world of abstraction—abstraction ruled, for the most part, by the demands of trade and capital” (Cresswell, 2006, p. 4-5). Anne Jensen also elaborates mobility as a key phenomenon of modernity. Mobility is enmeshed with spatial settings, which are subjected to diverse forms of power. Thus, the unconscious aspects of spatialized mobility are connected, and are presented as a channel of power-ridden practices. For Jensen, a Foucauldian constitution of power relates

to the perceptions, imaginations and experiences of mobility (Jensen, 2011, p. 255). Likewise, John Urry analyzes the automobile in the constitution of necessitated movement. This has been a modern constitution because with the emergence of motor car, division of workplaces, trade areas, housing became almost inevitable. These changes broadly contributed to long commutes, the necessity of living within road networks, the growing dependency as auto-subjects and above all the normalization of these divisions. As Urry notes, “automobility necessitates leisure visits to sites lying on the road network; it entraps people in congestion, jams and temporal uncertainties; and it encapsulates people in a privatized, cocooned, moving environment.” Hence, freedom in mobility through the motorcar generated the very problems that it aimed to solve in the first place (Urry, 2000, p. 59-60). For Paul Virilio, the nature and logic of the speed limit and technology increasingly determine people’s direct perception of the world. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the individual to conceive themselves as a meaningful subject with agency because now it is the laws of speed that modulate (Virilio, 2007, p. 31). Hence, these novel approaches moved from the fixed, dead, and functional perceptions of movement; and they laid a multilayered texture of the form, meaning and power enmeshed in the settings of mobility. To elaborate the arguments, Istanbul’s growth into a metropolis comes forth. It is a striking example because starting from the modernization strategies, the process that gave Istanbul a modern outlook leaped to a new level and a new pace after the 1980s. The structural needs of Istanbul as a metropolis gave way to its famous bus rapid transit—the metrobus as a major spatial practice in mobility.

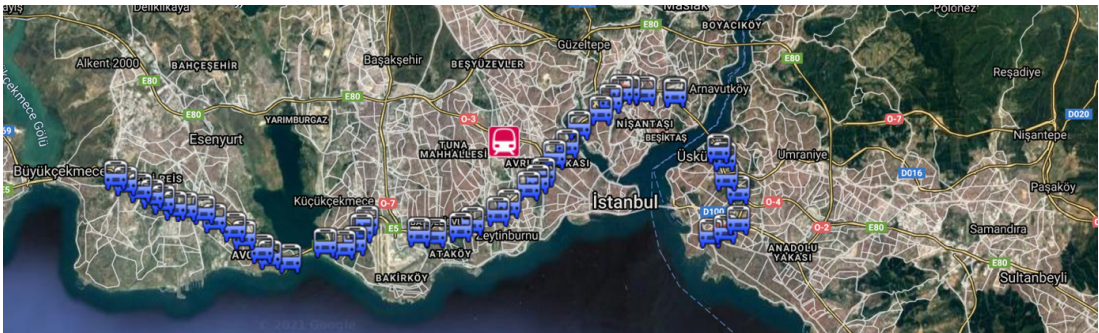
## Public Transport in Istanbul

As Murat Gül notes, until the mid-19th century, Istanbul had been a rather chaotic and overcrowded city, with an ineffective administration and transportation system. With the spirit of modernization, a rather slow but persistent change in the urban structure of Istanbul was initiated, which was also felt by the city’s transportation. As early as 1850, ferries started daily tours between Eminonu-Uskudar<sup>1</sup>; however, horse-drawn carriages had mainly provided land transport. The first step toward modernization came with the introduction of the tramway systems. Horse tramways first used in 1871 following the establishment of the Dersaadet Tramway Company (1869). The Tunnel—which was one of the earliest metros in the world—opened in 1875 between Karakoy-Galata,<sup>2</sup> and finally electric tramways followed in 1914. A rather significant step came 15 years later when buses entered service for the first time. This was significant because buses outshone the railway and the seaway. Policies directed to motorized transportation, and interrelatedly Istanbul’s urban structure, have been increasingly appropriated to motor-car transportation with a growing amount of projects for highways, tunnels, crossroads, bridges, and so on. In line with the growing metropolitan structure, new metro projects were initiated after 1989. However, conventional buses along with minibuses have mostly been dominant (Gül, 2009, p. 1; IETT History, 2020). In the early-2000s, “public transportation qualitatively and quantitatively fell far behind the growing mobility needs driven by the population growth and

economic development” (p. 59). The idea of a bus rapid transit outshone railway projects because it would provide “a high-capacity and high-quality service that would be cheaper and quicker to build than an urban rail system” (Alpkokin & Ergun, 2012: 59; Sutcliffe-Babalik & Cengiz, 2015, p. 795). Hence, the government started the planning and construction of public transit systems. The most prominent was the metrobus. The emergence of the metrobus enabled the reorganization of public transport because overall “1536 vehicles of intermediate forms of public transportation, partly or fully using the metrobus corridor, were removed” (Alpkokin & Ergun, 2012, p. 61). The metrobus project concurrently reflects the dominance of motorization in Istanbul’s public transport. The daily ridership of highway transport in 2019 was 77%, while railway and seaway were 18% and 4%, respectively. With an estimated population of 15,5 million, the density of Istanbul as a metropolis is beyond comparison in Turkey. Meanwhile, by the end of September 2020, the total number of registered cars in Turkey was near 24 million. Almost 20% of that number, specifically 4 million 306 thousand of them, were in Istanbul. Ankara and Izmir followed with 2 and 1,5 million respectively. The number of cars registered in Istanbul equals the registration rates of 20 cities. These numbers reveal the logic of development for mass transport and the logic of urgent solution presented by the metrobus project (TUIK, 2020; IETT, 2019).

**Figure 1**

Metrobus route viewed from Google maps.



As a bus rapid transit, the metrobus travels on prioritized roads from the Asian to the European parts of Istanbul bi-directionally. The first section of the metrobus was opened in 2007 as an 18-km line. In 2012, it reached its current length of 52 kilometers with 44 stations. Its popularity today is unprecedented because it is a strategic line. Located on Istanbul’s E-5 highway, the metrobus became an important transfer bus for the business and trade districts. Likewise, its transit route generates a critical time efficiency, especially during the rush hour. In 2019, an average of 296 million passengers used the metrobus. This number makes an average of some 800 thousand daily passengers. Considering the dominance of motorized transport, the demand for the metrobus is significant. In fact, the ridership numbers of busses reached 1 billion

63 million in 2019. However, this number was reached with an overall 6 thousand 274 buses travelling via 828 lines. In 2019, there were only 535 buses on the metrobus line. As Figure 1 shows, the metrobus line is in fact a single 52 km-line. Differences among the metrobus lines are distance related. Metrobuses complete the travel route over four lines, the nearest being 10 and the farthest being 18 km. The journey between the terminal stations takes approximately one and a half hours (IBB, 2020; Buran, 2013).

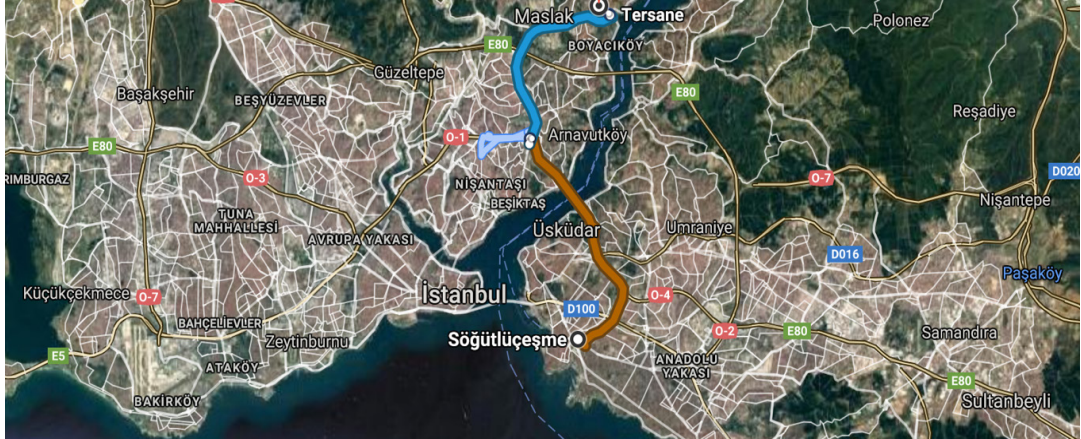
According to Sutcliffe-Babalik and Cengiz the metrobus is “a major trip generator” because it provides direct access to Istanbul’s central business district along the Maslak-Zincirlikuyu-Levent axis on the European side. The metrobus became attractive, particularly for Asian-side commuters who have to cross the Bosphorus to and from work. Thus, the metrobus provides efficiency in terms of its speed, route, and direct access to the business district. As the authors state, in a metropolis like Istanbul the dominant pattern in mobility is to commute from the outskirts to the central business district. Therefore, the corridor route to the E-5 highway was a deliberate choice (Sutcliffe-Babalik & Cengiz, 2015, pp. 796-808). Likewise, because of its strategic route, it is quite possible for an inhabitant in Beylikduzu to commute daily to and from Kadikoy via Sogutluceme<sup>3</sup>. Without the metrobus this would take no less than 2 to 3 hours, based on the traffic and density of public transport. Thus, the demand for the metrobus has been in proportion to Istanbul’s growth. It has become almost central to daily mobility in Istanbul because the 52-km line “passes through several districts in the area, causing a huge jump in urban fabric territories and residential areas” (Shoman & Demirel, 2020, p. 605). The metrobus as an intercontinental bus rapid transit has been important because of its characteristics and impacts; however, it is equally important for its constitution of spatial practice. The metrobus as a representation of speed and efficiency also generates an adjusted conception of mobility. In the following section, I will discuss the conception of transit-ness stated by the interlocutor for her metrobus experience.

### **The Metrobus: The “Ultimate Example” of Transit Mobility**

The metrobus is a major transport for the interlocutor because she must commute almost 30 kms (Figure 2). She uses the metrobus between Sogutluceme and Zincirlikuyu stations<sup>4</sup>, and then transfers to the subway to complete her daily route to and from work. As a regular passenger, the 30-year-old interlocutor spends on average 1 to 1,5 hours on the metrobus, along with its interchange areas. She wakes up at 7 a.m. in the morning, reaches her office at 9 a.m. and by around 8 to 8:30 p.m. she is back home. She uses the metrobus to commute 5 days each week. She used the metrobus occasionally on the weekends when she had to work overtime. She is an architect, and her spatial and temporal mobility frames her life-cycle during the weekdays. Her office routine takes approximately 9 to 10 hours of work, and she spends on average 2 hours on the roads. Hence, the trip generating effect of the metrobus is also speed for the interlocutor. She said that it was the fastest way for her to cross from Asian to European side, and this was the only reason for her preference of the metrobus.

**Figure 2**

Interlocutor's commuting route viewed from Google maps. The brown line indicates the metrobus route from Sogutlucesme to Zincirlikuyu.



Urry evaluated the problems of the automobile as systematically unintended. Consequently, the problems that the automobile aimed to solve generated a coercive effect. Coercion was the unintended outcome for freedom and flexibility because it constituted a frame in the necessitated movement (Urry, 2000, p. 60). The metrobus example shows how the pursuit of freedom and flexibility outgrew the intentions. The metrobus has become a very useful means of transport that avoids the burdens of Istanbul's traffic and the time spent on the roads, especially for the commuters. However, the very existence of the metrobus often eliminates the possibility of an alternative. The inhabitants become dependent on its transit circuit of speed and time. The spatial practice of the metrobus becomes an important determinant in the everyday. Given that metrobuses offer transit bus travel on the highway with extensive crowds, dependency on them is gradually consuming the spontaneity and socio-spatial experience of mobility. The interlocutor's brief reply for this experience stressed isolation: *I am completely isolated. People must directly poke me if they have something to say. Because sometimes I don't even respond to questions that I hear.* For Lefebvre, transportation was among the examples of sectoral homogenization and fragmentation of space. Because "these models are presented as the product of objective analyses, described as 'systemic', on a supposedly empirical basis." The so-called empirical basis of urban planning reduced society "to an endless parade of systems and subsystems" and thus, it is gradually eroding the chances for any social object to "pass for a coherent entity" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 311). Hence, the interlocutor generates a fragmented essence to complete her strict routine in Istanbul: *I cannot spend a lot of time at home. It's few hours only but since it is a more personal space, my intense perception of time goes away. I mean, my state of calculating hours finally disappears when I'm home.* Calculations become inevitable in her fragmented and necessitated mobility. Although the metrobus experience isolates her significantly, she relies



on its efficiency. Considering this dual effect, the metrobus shows the extent that conceptual planning could reach. The quote that follows has been an important example of this state. The interlocutor shared an ordinary but equally striking memory that she had when I asked about her impressions of the metrobus:

So, yesterday I came home from work with two friends. One of them lives on the European side. She joined us for the first time. Sadly, I realized how I am accustomed to living with the clock. Because to cross over the Anatolian side was like a pleasant trip for her. To me, it is to get home after a tiresome day at work... Because of the construction in the Bosphorus bridge, we used the ferry to Küçükusu. From Küçükusu to Üsküdar, from Üsküdar to Acıbadem via the Marmaray. Such an ordeal to me... They talked along the ferry, I listened to music and took a nap. After the ferry, I rushed to catch the bus to Üsküdar. They were looking around, talking. Because in fact Küçükusu is a sweet, green district. But I needed to catch the bus, then the Marmaray, so that I could reach at home at last. So, I kept asking them to hurry. My friend then turned and said, “you have become such an Istanbul prototype... You don’t even look around; you are only making haste to go home.” For a moment I felt sad for myself. Such mechanization... To travel via transit vehicles like the metrobus... makes transportation very asocial. Even my interaction with the environment is subzero. I do not interact during my inner-city travels. All I want is to catch that bus in 10 minutes, so that I don’t miss it and must wait for another... So, in that moment, I felt sad because of the inferiority of my life standard. It doesn’t take more than 20 minutes, but regardless I realized how I was rushing... But frankly, I think this city has transformed me like this. **It is really sad to say, but after a point you become transit... The metrobus is the ultimate example of it.** It is not like the subway; it doesn’t travel underground. You can watch E-5 highway as much as you want. You can see the Bosphorus. But you become so much transit... Then, it feels like traveling underground. I mean, it makes no difference actually. You don’t have the slightest communication with your environment. When I first crossed the Bosphorus, I used to watch its beauty, but now I just look and say, “oh we have crossed the Bosphorus.” I don’t even notice anymore... And when I do, now I just say “oh, we are approaching Zincirlikuyu.” Because that is where I get off... The metrobus puts you in that kind of routine. You don’t interact at all and you become transit. The metrobus is such a transit vehicle. It was made to be exactly that way, and it does exactly what it deserves in this respect. As I said, it is the ultimate example of it.

First, this quote reveals how the interlocutor experienced mobility as an everyday phenomenon in Istanbul. It is tied to modern chores of life and is enclosed by the representations of space. Her impression in this sentence is a clear indicator: *but frankly, I think this city has transformed me like this. It is really sad to say, but after a point you become transit.* The everyday life of the interlocutor is tied on the one hand to her daily necessities like commuting; while on the other hand, she depends on the city in fulfilling these needs. Where she lives, where she works, how she commutes and all the possibilities along with impossibilities that are mediated by them are actualized in Istanbul. For Lefebvre, the conceptualized space of representations “identify what is lived and what is perceived and what is conceived” (326). This reveals itself through urban planning because it is “the space of today’s planners, whose system of localization assigns an exact spot to each activity” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 45, 326). Each zone of activity that she parta-

kes in is structured under a particular spatial configuration based on the exchange value because Istanbul's evolution into a metropolis owes much to the process of economic liberalization and globalization after the 1980s. The changing socio-economic aspects in people's lives is in alignment with Istanbul's changing urban structure, with neoliberal urban policies. David Harvey embraces Lefebvre's discussion and argues that the laws of competitive capitalism construct their own spatial landscape, including physical and social infrastructures. It is the production of space in capital's own image. In particular, space-time has evolved through some transformative processes and the capitalist epoch of our day compresses them. This was the rational-mathematical conceptualization of space-time (Keyder & Öncü, 1994, p. 399; Harvey, 1973, p. 13-14; Harvey, 1990, p. 425). In this light, the interlocutor defines what it is *to become an Istanbul prototype* as *mechanization* because her everyday conducts conform with the compression of space-time. This again implies isolation. She is isolated from the set of relations inherent in spatial practices because mobility in Istanbul conditions her. Rather than a socio-spatial engagement, it connotes density, proximity along with temporal and spatial impossibilities. The conditioning aspect comes most obviously with temporal calculations because she expresses how she is *accustomed to living with the clock*. These are intertwined with spatial aspects, but the focal point is upon the idea of achieving a certain end within a limited timetable. The general theme of the quote suggests this, still the interlocutor states; *it doesn't take more than 20 minutes, but regardless I realized how I was rushing*. The calculative essence connects with daily necessities and as an outcome rushing becomes a normalized part of her transit mobility. As Urry discussed, the modern life is hurried, the self and its everyday has been reshaped. Life is 'on the move' now and this is the new "in which the capacity to be 'elsewhere' at a different time from others is central" (Urry, 2011, pp. 6-7). Thus, rushing as a common everyday characteristic is experienced unconsciously by the interlocutor and, as Virilio argued, speed determines the meaning in her perception of everyday (Virilio, 2007, p. 31).

Second, we understand from the quote that the metrobus helps the interlocutor to avoid long interchanges between different districts because she gives the maintenance work in the bridge as a reason for picking the longer path over the seaway. So, even if the metrobus achieves its very goal by rapid and transit journeys; transit-ness represents her perception of life in Istanbul because she takes the advantage of the metrobus and loads it with negation to represent her everyday life in Istanbul. As Lefebvre stated for his theoretical unity in the production of space, her everyday life and mobility in the metrobus, "involves, underpins and presupposes the other" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 14). The unifying label for this crosscut is "becoming transit." As was discussed, Jensen relates mobility and space to power through the production of "modern selves and modes of being through the very practices that are enmeshed in daily life and in urban policies." These mechanisms mold mobility as an outlook on life and power induces behaviors as normalization without coercion (Jensen, 2011, pp. 265-267). In relation to Istanbul's impact on the interlocutor's life quality, she emphasized how the metrobus *was made to be exactly that way, and it does exactly what it deserves in this respect*, hence the *ultimate example*. She emp-

hasizes a “normalized ordinary” with its accommodated conducts distinctively for the metrobus and indirectly for the everyday life of Istanbul. In the spatial practice of neocapitalism,” Lefebvre writes, “representations of space facilitate the manipulation” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 59). They are productive of certain modes and behaviors, and this is how they frame. For Stanek, this implies a totality that for instance, include “the one-sided perception of space by a driver or the reductive use of space in functionalist urbanism” (Stanek, 2008, pp. 69-70). Hence, the interlocutor emphasized the metrobus in conformity with conceptual production. The metrobus operates in the way that it was aimed to operate, but this conformity transformed it into a reductive space that generated a one-sided transit-ness for the interlocutor.

In line with its production, the spatial atmosphere generates a significant impact on our sensations. David Bissell questions the ways in which atmospheres affect mobile spaces: “Affective atmospheres are central to everyday conduct whilst on the move” because these atmospheres “precipitate particular structures of feeling” (p. 272). Bissell first reevaluates the concept of “social” as something more than interactional configurations of bodies and their performances. Even with passivity and with the lack of intentional, active practices, “intense negative effects still have the capacity to temper the lived experience of being with others” (p. 282). Such negative effects have been experienced by the interlocutor as an adjusted apathy because *the metrobus puts you in that kind of routine*. She implies the crowded experience of the rapid transit journeys that metrobuses offer. Second, like Jensen, Bissell also aims to reveal how “immateriality of atmosphere might serve as an equally powerful disciplinary force” (Bissell, 2010, pp. 272, 282). As the quote reveals, the interlocutor’s isolation is disrupted only through her reaching out to the destination. She mentions how the Bosphorus has become merely a reminder of the station that she gets off; *I don’t even notice anymore* (the Bosphorus). As Lefebvre discusses; “we may be sure that representations of space have a practical impact, that they intervene in and modify spatial *textures* which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42). This also shows the workings of knowledge, wealth and power in the representations of space and why they tend to dominate. In another sentence, she states that her isolation applies to mobility in general; *I do not interact during my inner-city travels*. Simply put, her experience of the metrobus has transformed the feeling of transit-ness to an all-pervasive situation. The spatial atmosphere affects, but its effect is deeply connected with the spatial production. In the dominance of representations of space, they generate a totalizing effect for the interlocutor; *You don’t have the slightest communication with your environment ... You don’t interact at all and you become transit*. “Becoming transit” defines her detachment from individuals, but also from surroundings that comprise subjects, objects, and practices. All things that constitute a socio-spatial engagement are subjected to detachment.

For Doreen Massey, flows, movements, possibilities, and all kinds of formations along with deformations make space relational, in which we can cut across myriad of stories. Massey embraced Lefebvre’s discussion of representational space and envisioned a constitutive aspect contrary to static stories of development because for Lefebvre, “representational space is alive: it

speaks” thus, it embraces action and lived situation. Lefebvre sees them “essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic” (Massey, 2009, pp. 16-17; Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42). The emphasis is upon the lived experience, as a dimension that presents the multiplicity of the world that we daily engage and make-sense. To make sense a reference such as *metrobus is the ultimate example of it* (becoming transit), one cannot help but think of the concept-city that continuously grows with a developmental mindset. It establishes a structure that silences, fixes, and inevitably homogenizes the myriad of stories. For Lefebvre, the modern everyday consumes the individual’s lifetime. Thus, the inhabitant as a conditioned being is no longer spontaneous. Self-regulation as an innate principle comes through voluntary programming (Lefebvre, 1971, pp. 72, 94). The interlocutor summarized this as follows: *All I want is to catch that bus in 10 minutes, so that I don’t miss and must wait for another*. The demand for calculations generates conditioned beings with few chances for spontaneity. Wilson points out how encounters during public travels are entangled with obligations of travels. However, they can “shape subjectivities during the journey and reproduce wider discourses and processes of belonging and differentiation” (Wilson, 2010, p. 641). In the interlocutor’s story, the process is productive of differentiation. The feeling of weariness and the image of automatization is almost visible in her story. She defines how she is increasingly losing her social ability to relate and to comprehend. In one phrase, she implied her indifference for this “utmost example”: *But you become so much transit... it makes no difference actually*. Becoming transit has become a very strong determinant in the everyday life of the interlocutor because routes, timetables, crowds, transfers, and the feeling of stress frame the image of a weekday toward the things she must complete. As a bus rapid transit, the metrobus has ironically become the representation of her everyday transit-ness. Together, they generate a consuming burden for her. Thus, “becoming transit” corresponds to the metrobus, but also exceeds it. As a result, her mobility is considerably homogenized, and lacks the social aspects of spatial practice.

## Conclusion

Cities continue to develop qualitatively and quantitatively, and our lives are extensively urbanized. Practices of the quotidian are enmeshed with our spatial engagement. Mobility is a genuine dimension of this engagement because it defines an adjusted spatial and temporal context. The social aspect of this context opens significant questions regarding the production, representation, and experience of modern mobilities. Consequently, the production of space embraces the production of mobilities. In this paper, I discussed the enclosing state of the transit mobility that is provided by Istanbul’s metrobus. Inspired by Henri Lefebvre’s triad, I questioned the metrobus as a representation of conceptual mobility. I reflected upon an explicit life story of an interlocutor that is drawn from the field research of my ongoing doctoral thesis and I discussed the framing aspect of transit mobility as a spatial practice.

The relationship between Istanbul as a metropolis and the metrobus as an urgent need are connected. However, this dual effect has reached such a degree that the interlocutor apprehends mobility in totality with her everyday experience. The metrobuses provided a functional solution for Istanbul's outward growth by providing a 52 km travel through a variety of central districts in the fastest possible time. While the representations of space continue to transform cities into "written forms," the example of the metrobus reveals how this so-called progress conditions the interlocutor. As an example of this phenomenon, the metrobus constituted a spatial engagement with the everyday world of the interlocutor because the rationalized maximization of speed and time makes up a closed-circuit of transit-ness in her everyday life. Therefore, she defined the spatial experience of the metrobus as the "ultimate example" of "becoming transit." As a bus rapid transit, the metrobus has ironically become the representation of her everyday transit-ness. While her urban mobility is severely homogenized, her socio-spatial isolation as a daily phenomenon is growing.

- 1 Eminonu is located at the southern end of the Galata Bridge, over the Golden Horn. Uskudar lies on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus. Today, ferries are still in use to cross the Bosphorus.
- 2 Karakoy is one of the oldest districts of Istanbul. It is at the northern end of Galata Bridge.
- 3 Beylikduzu and Sogutluceme are the last stations of the metrobus located in the European and Asian sides, respectively (Figure 1). While Beylikdüzü is a remote district in the Western edge, Sogutluceme is a neighborhood of Kadikoy, which is a central district in the Eastern side.
- 4 Zincirlikuyu is a central interchange station. It is overcrowded in the rush hour because commuters use the strategic route of the transfer area for the central trade and business district.

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