

## HIDDEN ECOLOGIES.

### UNRAVELLING THE ECOSYSTEMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF NON-PLACES

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RADU SIMION\*

**Abstract** This article delves into the dynamic landscape of contemporary ecological discourse, focusing on the intersection between *anthropos* and the environment—a complex interplay shaping their relationship. Within this context, non-places emerge as seemingly unnoticeable spaces, deserving comprehensive investigation in the evolving ecological rhetoric. Non-places, often overlooked in conventional analyses, play a profound role in shaping our interconnected existence with the environment. In response to this imperative, the present study endeavors to delve into the intricate layers of these non-places, employing the conceptual lens provided by Timothy Morton's hyperobject and ecological thought theories. By adopting Morton's theoretical framework, the investigation seeks to unravel the multifaceted dimensions of non-places, shedding light on their profound implications for the ongoing evolution of ecological consciousness. It advocates for a comprehensive and responsible perspective that transcends the boundaries of conventional approaches. In this way, the contents that delineate the complex field of ecology can be reduced to simpler meanings, which, although not organically leading to more optimistic perspectives, can however, revitalize and guide the spectrum of contemporary ecological discourse toward real possibilities for achieving sustainability goals and a genuine connection to what paradoxically has always been closest to us—namely, the biotic community and its constituent elements.

**Keywords** Hyperobjects, anthropocene, ecology, environmental ethics, non-places.

#### 1. Introduction

Spaces designated for temporary stay or transit, wherein individuals oscillate between daydreaming and distress, non-places encapsulate the dichotomy of venturing into the

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\* Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. [radu.simion@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:radu.simion@ubbcluj.ro).

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unknown and seeking solace in the familiar and predictable. As intersections of bodies in motion, these spaces can elicit both peculiarity and comfort. Within the tangible reality of contemporary existence, places, spaces, and non-places intricately weave and intersect. The existence of a non-place is not devoid of the presence of a place; instead, places serve as havens for non-places. Within these realms, solitary individuals traverse both physically and psychologically, moving towards *elsewhere* and temporarily disengaging from the past to inhabit a present hurtling towards future experiences.<sup>1</sup>

Despite their seemingly homogeneous and flat nature, non-places are replete with meanings. In the context of the ecological crisis, it becomes thought-provoking to explore the possibility of integrating these seemingly identity-less spaces into the horizon of care and protection. This concern extends beyond routine maintenance services, and aims to express genuine care for areas and spaces that may lack the “naturalness” or tranquility associated with conventional landscapes. The proliferation of non-places across urban landscapes and beyond underscores the expansion of spaces tailored to human interests at the expense of modified landscapes.

This exploration redirects attention towards what currently lacks historical ties with its surroundings, however, it may eventually become as familiar as the lawn in front of a house. The interpretation of non-places as integral components of larger biotopes aligns with a holistic vision, drawing inspiration from Morton's theories about hyperobjects and ecological thought. This perspective offers a broader understanding of the intricate interplay between anthropic and natural spaces, positioning non-places within the complex whole that environmental policies strive to preserve, in line with sustainability initiatives, 'green' urban planning, and sustainable development.

Non-places, whether real or imaginary, represent peculiar psychological realities. A nuanced exploration of our mental spaces, characterized by attentiveness and honesty, reveals both cherished aspects of our consciousness and neglected areas that evoke feelings of strangeness, anguish, and anxiety. The proposition is to engage with these non-places deliberately, lingering long enough to uncover their attributes, and subsequently, progress with this knowledge towards a more comprehensive understanding. This inclusive approach acknowledges the sources of evolution inherent in both the overtly serene dimensions of our consciousness and the darker, opaque, and abyssal aspects of our human nature.

## 2. Lived experiences and cultural narratives in non-places

In their apparent anonymity, non-places seem estranged from the natural world, disconnected from the landscapes and ecosystems often associated with traditional notions of ecological significance. However, a more profound exploration unveils a web of intricate connections woven within these seemingly impersonal domains. At its core, the challenge posed by non-places is a call for a shift in perspective—moving from the tendency to perceive them through

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<sup>1</sup> Auge, Marc. *Non-Places: An Introduction to Anthropology of Supermodernity* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1992).

a lens that hastily labels them as devoid of ecological significance. This shift requires a willingness to delve into their depths, recognizing them not as voids but as repositories of interconnectedness waiting to be unveiled.<sup>2</sup>

The term 'non-place' encapsulates two interconnected yet separate phenomena: spaces created to serve specific functions such as transportation, transit, commerce, and leisure, and the interactions individuals have within these spaces. The first aspect of 'non-place' pertains to the tangible environments created with distinct purposes in mind. The second facet delves into the human experience within these spaces. These spaces become conduits for a diverse array of connections—both internal, with oneself, and external, with others. Despite the convergence of these two facets within the concept of non-place, they maintain a distinction. The physical spaces exist with predetermined objectives and design, while the human interactions within these spaces unfold in a manner that surpasses these designated purposes. Non-places, therefore, act as intermediaries facilitating numerous connections, reflecting the intersection of human relationships both with the self and with others.

The significance of non-places transcends the conventional ecological metrics that focus on flora and fauna. It encompasses the varied texture of lived human experiences, emotional landscapes, and cultural narratives that are woven within these spaces. The imperative lies not in imposing a predetermined ecological paradigm upon these non-places, but rather in allowing the intrinsic character and essence of these spaces to manifest organically. Acknowledging the lived experiences inherent within non-places affords a deeper comprehension of their ecological worth, extending our understanding beyond mere quantitative assessments.

Deleuze and Guattari's<sup>3</sup> concept of the "rhizome" offers a compelling theoretical framework for comprehending the non-linear and interconnected dynamics inherent in non-places, such as airports. The rhizome, characterized by its decentralized structure, parallels the intricate and multifaceted relationships that manifest within these dynamic hubs. Departing from a hierarchical model, where interactions adhere to a predetermined trajectory, the rhizomatic nature of airports permits the symbiosis of experiences, and connections. Furthermore, Foucault's conceptualization of heterotopias can serve as a valuable instrument for unraveling the complex layers that constitute non-places. In Foucault's discourse, heterotopias are defined as spaces existing beyond conventional societal norms, forming unique environments where diverse elements converge.<sup>4</sup>

Adopting this perspective is particularly revelatory when examining non-places, which, as manifestations of heterotopias, defy the expectation of a monolithic function. Heterotopias

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Merriman, "Driving places Marc Augé, non-places, and the geographies of England's M1 motorway," *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 21, No. 4–5 (2004): 145–167.

<sup>3</sup> Giles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," in Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943–1968* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1993), 419–426.

serve as counter-sites, encapsulating both utopian ideals and dystopian realities, thereby becoming fertile grounds for contradictions and complexities. Through the prism of heterotopia, non-places are reconceptualized as dynamic landscapes that resist reductive classifications. The coexistence of elements such as duty-free shops, gourmet eateries, and leisure facilities alongside departure lounges and immigration checkpoints engenders an environment that obscures the boundaries between utilitarian spaces and areas of leisure. This amalgamation subverts traditional perceptions of non-places, imbuing them with a vitality that surpasses their function as mere conduits of transit, as delineated by.<sup>5</sup>

It is within this dynamism that the ecological significance of non-places comes to light. They are not detached entities but integral components of the intricate dance between humanity and the environment. Rejecting or overlooking them within the ecological discourse would be akin to dismissing the complexity of a symphony by fixating on individual notes. Rather, it is imperative to acknowledge non-places as crucibles of complexity, wherein the intricate symphony of ecological interconnectivity unfolds in subtle and unforeseen manners.<sup>6</sup>

Within non-places, social interaction takes on a distinct dimension, undergoing a process of reconstitution to adapt to the unique characteristics of these spaces. Contrary to the assumption that non-places lack meaningful connections, they emerge as arenas where social relations are not only sustained but revitalized. Moreover, the concept of non-places challenges the conventional view of space as a static and fixed entity, introducing a dynamic perspective that recognizes spaces, whether traditional or non-traditional, undergo constant transformation and adaptation.<sup>7</sup>

The inherent seclusion of non-places should neither provoke alarm nor necessitate a response strictly conforming to the principles of sustainable development. It is recognized that such environments may induce a state of immobilization and muteness in individuals—a critical threshold that signifies both an arrival and a potential departure point for reactive measures, which may take the form of either evasion or confrontation.

Within the framework of ecological thought, the recognition of non-places accentuates the imperative to cultivate an anticipatory affective metabolism capable of assimilating crises and uncertainties without vehemently resisting the unknown or negating its presence. Norms and instructions in non-places are construed as provisional shelters, serving as poignant reminders of the pervasive existence of emptiness.<sup>8</sup>

Extending the examination beyond urban passageways unveils the elusive nature of control and anticipation within the encompassing space, presenting at least two exits for

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<sup>5</sup> Gilles Delalex, "Non-places: The Everyday Experience of Flows," *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 11 (2002).

<sup>6</sup> James Graham Ballard, *Airports: The Cities of the Future* (Blueprint: Architecture, Design and Contemporary Culture, No. 142 (1997): 26–29.

<sup>7</sup> M. Korstanje, and G. Skoll, *Special section: the dialectics of borders, empires and limens, Rosa dos Ventos*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2013): 77–185.

<sup>8</sup> Timoth Morton, *Ecology Without Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

contemplation. Instead of adhering rigidly to established norms, attention ought to be realigned towards our collective ability to reconvene and adapt in response to ontological challenges. Non-places, delineated by their unique characteristics, furnish propitious moments for introspective contemplation, thereby affording a significant receptivity to the inherent disorientation and ambiguity that accompanies such experiences.

### 3. **Hyperobjects and *ecological thought* in action**

Timothy Morton contends that prevailing ecological notions of “place” emphasize delineation, comparison, and dualism, situating the surrounding environment as a foreign “other” positioned “beyond” us, on the periphery.<sup>9</sup> Instead, Morton advocates for a paradigm wherein coexistence serves as the central concept, offering a framework to comprehend and draw closer to what paradoxically exists in proximity to us, namely the surrounding environment. Despite historical conceptualizations steeped in the notions of untamed, mysterious, and inhospitable wilderness, Morton proposes an integrative and holistic perspective characterized by an appreciation for the peculiarities and expanses of natural spaces.

Morton posits that the essence of ecology lies in the pursuit of interconnectedness, with ecological thought intrinsically encapsulating the attribute of connectivity. This notion surpasses the entrenched Cartesian dualism characteristic of Enlightenment thought, suggesting a more integrated and holistic approach to understanding the interrelations within the natural world. This ecological mindset is all-encompassing, embodying an anti-intellectual and sensual nature, thereby transcending conventional dichotomies of scale such as “microscopic” versus “macroscopic” or spacial proximity such as “near” and “far”. In essence, ecological thinking represents a phenomenon wherein all elements, be they products or residues, recombine into the intricate phenomena of mental life. It serves as a model of inclusion and sustainability, inviting reflection on our perceptions of Nature.

The mesh is of such expansive magnitude that it subsumes all entities which, ostensibly, elude our sphere of interest. All aesthetic categories become valid and must be considered; nothing can remain “outside” if we aim to address climate issues from the perspective of a holistic vision. Elements that are traditionally perceived as shameful, depressing, melancholic, or grim are transformed into focal points of curiosity that warrant closer examination if we want to understand and protect all the threads of the network. What is appealing about this new approach to ecological thinking is that it radically emphasizes the need to integrate those nuances we considered unworthy, lacking in the aesthetics of beauty, or unattractive to our sustainability goals. In light of this perspective, hyperobjects emerge as vast constructs that confront and destabilize traditional conceptions of temporality and spatiality. Illustrated by the profound and far-reaching impacts of climate change, these entities prompt an engagement with the inherent interconnectedness woven into our ecological reality. In Morton's theoretical construct, environmental challenges transcend

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<sup>9</sup> Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

localized incidents, extending beyond specific locations and temporal confines to materialize as extensive constellations that defy encapsulation within the traditional perimeters of our cognitive map.

Examined through the lens of ecological interconnectedness, hyperobjects emerge as the dynamic core of an intricate network interwoven into the fabric of our shared reality. The reverberations of climate change permeate ecosystems, weaving through the intricate web of non-human and human existence alike. Modifications in oceanic thermal conditions, the dissolution of polar ice caps, and transformations in meteorological trends induce profound disturbances through this interconnected network, influencing species migration, biodiversity, and the delicate equilibrium of ecosystems.

Upon acknowledging the reciprocal engagement and mutual influence of all phenomena, it becomes imperative to recognize the absence of distinct points of interest, peripheries, centers, domesticity, wilderness, or the dichotomy between the natural and artificial. Evolution, in its mutagenic essence, lacks inherent purpose, leading to the coexistence of all living beings and phenomena within the same spatial realm. The demystification of nature embodies the Copernican truth essential for the comprehension of ecological intricacies. Biological niches exhibit overlapping characteristics, and a synthesis of materialistic perspectives aligns with various exemplary modes of thought—be they philosophical, naturalistic, religious, or anthropological—to foster a more refined comprehension and integration of the environment's continuous and omnipresent character. This absence of background and somewhat phantasmagorical presence interrogates established presuppositions, compelling an exhaustive reevaluation of ecological intricacies.

Within this framework of reference, ecological initiatives manifest as genuine expressions, serving as a diverse array that mirrors the inherent inclination of thought to expand. It is essential to recognize this expansive inclination for what it is, neither suppressing it nor misinterpreting it as an embodiment of strength or a morally guided inclination towards sanctified holism. Rather, this inclination can manifest as self-referential, unjust, mundane, and temporally fragmented. A comprehensive exploration of non-places reveals historical delocalization, analogous to encounters with monsters and chimeras in ecological contemplation.

The motivation for preservation is not necessarily tied to spending a night in a supermarket parking lot but relies on an awareness of intricate connections linked to our needs. Before motivation surfaces, a cause for wonder emerges: everything is interconnected, and, as posited by Commoner, escape is impossible without encountering oneself—the one who seeks evasion. The lens of ecological interconnectedness prompts a deeper understanding, unraveling layers of dissonance and revealing profound synergies.<sup>10</sup>

The tendrils of climate change infiltrate seemingly mundane spaces, exposing concealed ecological threads that bind our actions to the broader environmental milieu. This

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<sup>10</sup> Plumwood, Val. "Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling," *Australian Humanities Review*, No. 44, (2008): 139–150.

perspective challenges the dichotomy between hyperobjects and non-places, acknowledging their intricate interplay within the grand orchestration of ecological interconnectedness.

Given this background, displacement is conceptualized as a form of discontinuity, representing a sense of separation from the familiar, such as one's "home." This displacement induces a strangeness in the very familiarity we seek to connect with, revealing vast worlds, open universes, strange objects, ironic juxtapositions, and substantial expanses of emptiness upon closer analysis. The most intimately known entities become devoid of their inherent essence, unraveling as processes of continuous crossing and perpetual movement. Mountains, for instance, are perceived as colossal geological waste repositories, displaying layered "dead" remnants that challenge the assumed solidity and persistence of matter. A microscopic or geological examination exposes their fragmentation, ambiguity, and lack of inherent purpose, emphasizing a continuous intersection and perpetual movement, where nothing exists as a complete entity in itself. The ensuing uncertainty and fear of mortality arise organically in these conditions, wherein the comprehensibility of the world appears to elude our grasp, and time takes on a compressive, stretching nature that confronts the human mind seeking precise organization and predictability.<sup>11</sup>

This state of affairs leads to the disappearance of a sense of anticipation, replaced by a prevailing feeling of insecurity in which caution becomes both futile and devoid of dignity. The conceptualization of space opening up becomes a new perspective from which to view emptiness, voids, and the apparent fullness of matter in nature. Morton posits this vision of openness, devoid of any ideological closure, as a means to signal the narrow and unjust perspectives through which we have traditionally perceived the world. As frames of reference and modes of observation shift, there is a corresponding transformation in the understanding of notions such as "dwelling," cycles, and repeating processes.

The concept of the house evolves into a moving territory, eluding constancy and forgoing commitment to a stable, anchored, and unchanging reality. Localized thinking is deemed insufficient by Morton, as it tends to confine, separate, punctuate, and isolate. According to him, the emerging ecological thinking must embrace vastness, embodying a perspective of boundless and centerless spatiality. It becomes a tapestry rich in meaning and value, encapsulating life in its diverse senses. The perceived emptiness and absence of familiar references should not evoke fear; rather, manifestations such as concrete, polyethylene, and farm chickens are viewed as expressions of mutations in thinking, freely articulating what is intrinsic to our own natural thought processes.<sup>12</sup>

The acknowledgment of interdependence is closely tied to the recognition of dependencies, symbiosis, exchange, and reciprocity. Entities that may seem strange or unfamiliar emerge at the confluence of the known and the incomprehensible, whether

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<sup>11</sup> Dylan Trigg, "Bodily Moods and Unhomely Environments: The Hermeneutics of Agoraphobia," in *Interpreting Nature: The Emerging Field of Environmental Hermeneutics*, ed. Forrest Clinger et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Alan R. White, *Modal Thinking*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).

discussing phenomena like the “organism” of global warming, creatures taken for granted, the concept of otherness, or natural entities and microbes.

The moral imperative of caring for others is characterized through a reflexive exercise that manifests our existence as beings in relationships with other (dis)organized forms of life, assuming the coherence of a self merging with the idea of “individual, personal identity.” If nothing exists outside the Whole, thinking becomes entwined with the mesh once its (in)conveniences are recognized. The awareness of connection is accompanied by a responsibility towards the world within this playful yet austere horizon, particularly pertinent amidst the ongoing climate crisis. Intimacy and proximity to other entities are marked by their intrinsic oddity, ambivalence, and possibly even aspects of repulsion. In this realization of discontinuity and interdependence, nothing can be omitted; everything becomes an expression of a communal existence from which each individual draws sustenance.

Disorientation and emptiness emerge as foundational categories in comprehending the expansive scope of ecological thinking. The therapeutic approach to ecology is not considered a conclusive solution, and the analysis of the aesthetics of ugliness is not indicative of our inadequacies. Acknowledging depth and embracing the absurd are seen as indicators of mental health. The persistent advocacy for sustainability, even beyond critical thresholds, is deemed not only futile but also degrading to the integrity of ecological thinking.<sup>13</sup>

The call for localized thinking confines cognition within spatial constraints, and the once-salient reference point of omnipresent and all-encompassing space loses its significance. Recognizing the ubiquity of cosmic space leads to a void of reference points, freeing our field of vision to apprehend and comprehend the inherently evident: every locale serves as the genesis, and Nature is not observed in a state of decline, but rather as the pathology of our compulsive discourse.

Entities within hyperspace need not destabilize our convictions or disrupt our moral foundations. The disorientation often experienced arises from our fixation on physical locations, the desire for possession, and an attachment to clearly delineated boundaries. A mediator seeking truth must acknowledge the transitory nature of the playing field and, concurrently, liberate participants to engage in the struggle without conflict, achieve victories without permanent stakes, and endure losses that are merely transient, as the ultimate outcome remains within their control. The essence of ecological thinking, expansive and shrouded in obscurity, finds its foundation in non-places.

The urgency for ecological sustainability intensifies when confronting the indisputable presence of hyperobjects, particularly the imminent threat of climate change. Morton's conceptual framework necessitates an acknowledgment that environmental challenges surpass specific locales or isolated incidents, forming intricate constellations that defy conventional boundaries and challenge historical paradigms that segmented our understanding of environmental issues.

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<sup>13</sup> Maximiliano. E. Korstanje, “Philosophical problems in the theory of non-place: Marc Augé,” *International Journal of Qualitative Research in Services*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2016): 85–98.



Ecological contemplation serves as a vehicle for acquainting ourselves with unfamiliar aspects of our surroundings, including the peculiarities of traversing an airport, encountering metal bars, navigating sliding doors, and engaging with luggage protection zones adjacent to tent entrances. Non-places, characterized by their automated nature and a certain repetitiveness, gain relevance through ecological thinking, which directs attention to all entities, whether artificial, natural, organic, or polyurethane. The distinctiveness of non-places may manifest in the discomfort they induce, the darkness they exude, or the nauseating responses they elicit. Within an ecological framework, the recognition that an object's efficiency parallels the acknowledgment of one's existence in thought becomes apparent, coexisting with other temporarily existing objects under certain form.

In this heightened state of awareness, the imperative for ecological sustainability gains prominence by acknowledging hyperobjects, exemplified by phenomena like climate change, as pervasive and interconnected. Morton's perspective encourages a departure from conventional compartmentalized thinking, urging a holistic comprehension that considers the intricate relationships within our global ecosystem.

#### **4. Impermanence and fragility: rethinking conventional notions**

Given the current context, marked by a convergence of alarming climate indicators signaling an unavoidable descent into perilous territory, conventional rhetorical approaches of lamentation or feigned compassion for the planet prove to be distinctly ineffective. The imminent specter of catastrophe, having surpassed its initial dawn, has thrust us into the midst of a pivotal moment marked by the eradication of species, with environmental conditions escalating to a critical juncture. Our climate is experiencing a rapid and severe decline, symbolized by a gradual ascent in temperature akin to water reaching its boiling point, reminiscent of the metaphorical frog passively enduring the ramifications of inaction and a deficit of awareness and responsiveness. The efficacy of fulfilling our ecological duty has become obsolete, marking an era dominated by the hygienic paradigm of a pseudo-immaculate culture fixated on duty, where imperatives crumble before narratives emphasizing incremental accomplishments.

Simultaneously, individuals, ostensibly disconnected, converge around a commendable discourse, each participant embarking on a journey to unearth internal culpability through reparative actions, aspiring to cultivate a pristine future. Nevertheless, these individual endeavors not only fall short of resonating with collective well-being but also manifest as a synthetic and artificial hope, suggesting salvation through individual and collective action. The escalating density of dilemmas and the emergence of new questions mirror the deepening trends of individualization and globalization, necessitating a collaborative alloy resilient to epistemological uncertainties. As the processes of isolation and localization unfold, the realization dawns that nothing exists in complete isolation; boundaries and layers consist of pores and openings facilitating reactions and communication among organisms. The effectiveness of collective efforts thrives when grounded in a shared language. Non-places, distinguished by unaesthetic environments governed by clear, repeatable laws, provide fertile

ground for ecological contemplation. These environments foster a contractual agreement and a collective forcing, uniformly achieved by individuals aligning with the intrinsic nature of the place, guided by its widely recognized rules and laws.

Climate change, embodying a quintessential hyperobject, exemplifies the intricate complexity of interconnected systems. Its reverberations extend across continents, affecting ecosystems, weather patterns, and the delicate equilibrium of global biodiversity. Morton's conceptualization encourages a shift in perspective, viewing climate change not as an isolated incident but as a dynamic force interwoven with myriad ecological threads that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. This acknowledgment of hyperobjects challenges the prevailing notion that environmental issues are localized and can be addressed in isolation. Morton's conceptualization catalyzes a paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive and interconnected environmental consciousness. It accentuates the urgency of adopting sustainable practices that not only address the immediate manifestations of environmental challenges but also account for the far-reaching consequences within the intricate constellations of our global ecosystem.

The surrounding environment is imbued by distant influences, where the familiar intermingles with the unfamiliar, and the local intertwines with the global. Non-places, characterized by automated spaces with repetitive traits, possess experiential and psychological dimensions. Overcoming the compulsive obsession for order, delineation, and ownership of spaces and boundaries becomes imperative. Non-places, albeit strange and characterized by incompleteness, have the capacity to exist "anywhere" (potentially inducing anxiety) while concurrently being present "here" (offering a psychologically soothing effect). Non-places emerge as environments of existence, giving rise to new phenomena and intrigues, where nothing attains perfection in accordance with the assimilated notion of the "environment."

Brugiatelli explores the concept of *detritorialization* to illuminate the feelings of disorientation and alienation individuals undergo in the context of widespread urbanized spaces.<sup>14</sup> This experience is marked by the dissolution and fragmentation of the sense of belonging within landscapes homogenized by consumption-centric tendencies. Spatial identity rupture, delocalization, and a loss of a cohesive sense of identity ensue. Conventional demarcations between core and peripheries lose their essence as everything becomes ubiquitously accessible, driven by the pervasive force of consumption, which, despite its superficial hospitality, lacks a genuine desire for connection. Proximity becomes elusive, prompting a reassessment of our relationship with space and the temporality of events occurring in culturally and historically isolated environments.

The mesh of human-altered systems expands to encompass natural territories, seamlessly incorporating non-places into the newly created niche. These seemingly nondescript locales, serving as permeable layers within the intricate social organism, facilitate

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<sup>14</sup> Vereno Brugiatelli, "For an Ethical and Integrated Way of Life: From Non-places to Places of Human Interaction," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, No.223 (2016): 58-61.

communication, digestion, transformation, and excretion among diverse entities such as enzymes, bacteria, and cellular residues.

Within this dynamic context, non-places emerge as integral components of a mutagenic social evolution, capable of transforming into refuges, sanctuaries, or oases of contemplation. The geological pace of mutations renders these transformations perceptible only retrospectively, as minor alterations can transmute familiar places into non-places.

In navigating the unfamiliar, care, compassion, and prudence harmonize, urging restraint from hasty judgments based on the strangeness of a place. Recognizing the potential for a seemingly unfamiliar space to evolve into a cherished home in the future becomes imperative. In this conceptualization, the notion of non-place metaphorically represents a species, while a specific locale embodies a variety, prompting an exploration focused on a singular species. The non-place, symbolizing monstrosity, may serve as the backdrop of primordial fear, wherein a designated place functions as a psychological refuge—a tool fostering cooperation with the unseen, the ambiguous, the vague, and the diffuse.<sup>15</sup>

Essentially, the imperative of ecological sustainability gains prominence through the realization that hyperobjects necessitate a holistic and interconnected approach to environmental stewardship. Morton's conceptual framework advocates transcending compartmentalized thinking, emphasizing that our actions resonate throughout the intricate web of ecological relationships defining our interconnected existence. Sustainability mandates a comprehensive understanding of hyperobjects, compelling conscientious practices that acknowledge the intricate constellations within our environmental reality. This imperative challenges conventional environmental ethics, expanding its scope beyond pristine landscapes to include transient spaces like bustling terminals, consumer-driven venues, and expansive networks of highways. The ethical obligation to address ecological challenges permeates the seemingly inconspicuous spaces of our daily lives.

In examining the essence of materials, the seeming permanence of matter becomes difficult to hold onto, putting into question the belief in its constant solidity. Upon closer examination, what appears as an inert mound unfolds as a formidable mountain composed of remnants, waste, and excretions, blurring the boundaries between the living and non-living. Scientific frameworks, with their classifications of degrees and hierarchies, shed light on the inherent instability and vulnerability within the dynamic and mutable nature of life forms. This realization necessitates a reevaluation of conventional notions, urging a consideration of the impermanence and fragility that underlie the essence of existence.

The reliance on illusions, whether through aesthetic admiration or purported alignment with “caring for others,” is deemed ineffective and pretentious. A persistent position of superiority may pervade such admiration, lacking not only compassion but also genuine aesthetics, appearing unjust and distorted. Admiring nature out of a sense of duty is considered deceptive, representing a relinquishment of moral freedom and serving as a guise to conceal acts of destruction. Pretense, in this context, reflects an excess of proximity rather

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<sup>15</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012).

than distance, entailing knowledge situated in an inopportune face-to-face context where dissimulation prevails over playful engagement. While acknowledging our capacity for temporary visits and the return to more “noble” sentiments, the term “noble” is recognized with a potential pejorative connotation. Freedom, it is asserted, is contingent upon depth and is only manifest within profound realms, such as caves and murky locations where the exquisite lotus flower flourishes. It is emphasized that the concept of non-places should not supersede or negate social instincts, as entities deviating from our envisioned state are fundamentally not dissimilar from our perceived selves.<sup>16</sup>

The realm of imagination extends beyond the confines of the “self,” with one's ability to imagine correlating with the capacity to safeguard. Excessive fidelity to appearances is critiqued, leading to a call for celebration, acceptance, and eventual release. Non-places are characterized as enigmatic entities situated at the juncture of one location and another. A thorough exploration of the identity of places is deemed valuable, emphasizing their inherent complexity and impenetrability. Clear demarcations prove elusive, despite apparent boundaries established by walls, advertising structures, and instructions affixed to ticket machines.<sup>17</sup> Doubt and uncertainty are identified as manifesting profound ecological dimensions, discernible within tangible artifacts like refuse receptacles, security apparatuses at airports, and sanitary amenities in supermarket lavatories.

Engaging in ecological and holistic contemplation is posited to require a perceptive gaze characterized by receptivity and endurance toward elements that may seem least deserving of admiration. The maturation process is conceptualized as the commencement of stewardship over aspects previously perceived as perpetually beyond our responsibilities. In acknowledging vulnerability, the imperative is underscored to initiate a collective convergence with other entities through a strategy of mutual compassion, all while preserving the emotions of shame, guilt, and confusion that invariably accompany shared experiences.

Aligned with Morton's perspective, the revelation of darkness is framed as embodying a caring disposition. Guilt, in turn, is positioned as a mode of revelation, while the denial of guilt is cast as an aggressive act. Moral conduct is advocated to refrain from exhibiting preferential behavior and, instead, undertake actions independently. The neighbor, when perceived from a distance, may appear counterintuitive, yet a closer engagement with that which is remote cultivates an impression of achievable lucidity.

The recurrence of experiences over time is depicted as instilling habitual responses. As long as admiration, astonishment, or wry amusement persist, responsibility for the environment within which aspirations are projected is sustained. The onus of responsibility extends to the ambient surroundings, serving as the conduit for transmitting auditory waves conveying messages to others, thus increasing the likelihood of collaboration. In essence, the

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<sup>16</sup> Barbara Adam, *Timescapes of Modernity: The Environment and Invisible* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Samantha Clark, “Strange strangers and uncanny hammers: Morton's The Ecological Thought and the phenomenological tradition,” *Green Letters* 17, 2 (2013): 98-108.

text concludes by proposing a reframing of the conventional notion of caring for the environment into a realization that individuals are not merely part of it but rather integral components constituting the environment itself.

## 5. Conclusion

In the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of our psychological life, encompassing feelings, beliefs, values, and environmental attitudes, an attitude of compassion is advocated. This understanding extends to the origins of aesthetic attitudes, emphasizing the intricate web of connections between these psychological aspects and our identification with the surrounding environment. The immediacy and tangibility of emotions such as intimacy, detachment, and aversion highlight the imperative for an ecological ethos that promotes the concepts of “embrace,” amalgamation, acceptance, and incorporation of discomfiting realities and truths. The imperative is to progress towards a holistic understanding that sensually embraces the ephemerality of human existence, acknowledging the discontinuity, erosion, and triumph of Time over mechanically measured times.

While an aesthetic attitude or psychological reward holds merit, it is asserted that these alone are not sufficient reasons to formulate a consistent response to socio-political, ideological, and economic challenges. The climate crisis, characterized by unpredictability, calls for a regenerative essence in ecological thinking. Discussions on the advancements of artificial intelligence are urged to assimilate intrapsychic contents often avoided—hesitation, melancholy, depression, and the sense of ending. Art, philosophy, music, and storytelling are identified as essential components, intertwining scientific pursuits with the vulnerability arising from a healthy expression of affectivity.

Non-places are conceptualized as the Void within us, drawing attention to aspects that require courage for thorough exploration. This Void serves as a source of insight into categorical nuances vital for protecting and developing the existential status of humans in relation to themselves and their external perceptions.

Non-places are deemed significant embodiments of our ontological status, unveiling the (un)pleasant profile of our moral constitution. Faced with this reality, the call is for an educational approach that cultivates an optimal balance between shaping independence and recognizing the dependence on the surrounding environment. The lucidity of results and revelations from the depths of our minds signify the integration of all spaces into the spatiality of our consciousness. This integration is distinguished by a bold receptivity towards our existence, infused with a joyful wisdom and resilient gentleness, anchored in a clear comprehension of the pulse of reality and the application of judicious discernment in ethically dilemmatic instances.