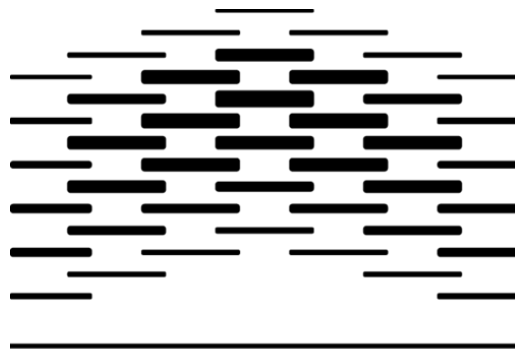Galina Shavard

Learning in Third Spaces

A study examining non-formal educational practices in the multicultural
sociocultural landscapes of Oslo and Moscow

HØGSKOLEN I OSLO OG AKERSHUS

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Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences

Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the meanings and values that non-formal learning practices conducted in open third spaces manifest in relation to the sociocultural landscape of a multicultural city. Two sample settings are Oslo and Moscow—cities that significantly differ in culture, population size, diversity patterns and wealth index, to mention just a few factors. However, the phenomenon of third spaces (and a culture of NFL around them) is shared and, in this sense, their unlikeness provides an opportunity for a more nuanced and contextualized discussion.

The study builds upon the data from qualitative interviews supplemented by observations and the media review. The informants are those who create and manage thirds spaces, run NFL practices and set their agenda: programming directors of museums, libraries, cultural centers, and public spaces of a similar sort. The ambition of such spaces is generally twofold: to shape an intellectual environment of the city as well as to contribute to a stronger sense of community.

The data was analyzed through the conceptual lenses of the liquid modernity theory with a specific focus on such concepts as globalization, diversity, non-formal learning and city as a social construct. Third spaces were studied as sociocultural contexts in which particular educational practices are conducted to create a shared experience in the joy of learning.

Throughout the study I argue for a number of reasons why third spaces play a critical role in contemporary multicultural urban societies. I assert that through open non-formal educational practices third spaces help construct local communities and bolster a sense of belonging and shared identity. All of these factors make life in the city better-knit, more secure and fulfilling. The study contributes to the fields of educational studies and urban anthropology shedding light on the interconnectedness of non-formal educational practices in third spaces and cohesiveness of a multicultural city.

Key words: third spaces, non-formal learning, liquid modernity, diversity, community, multicultural city

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

FOM   Public Opinion Fund (Moscow)

NFL   Non-formal learning

MISCP   Moscow Institute for Socio-Cultural Programs and Research

OECD   Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SSB   Statistisk sentralbyrå I Norge

UN   United Nations

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1   Introduction

The world is becoming more and more urbanized with an ever-increasing proportion of people living in cities that number in the tens of millions (OECD, 2013b; UN Habitat, 2013). These inhabited formations are sometimes so characterless and segregated (e.g. Keiner, Koll-Schretzenmayr, & Schmid, 2005) that it is hard to associate them with a classic European notion of a city that in the Ancient Greek sense implied a strong emphasis on social unity, public interest and shared space (e.g. Hansen, 1998). No matter how diverse urbanization is in its manifestations, history-wise this global tectonic shift from rural to urban living entails critical consequences for how we live, work, and build communities and families. Indeed, it inflicts change to all domains of the society, and brings a vital discussion about the quality of urban living on the front burner.

At first sight, it may seem as if cities look increasingly uniform being shaped and leveled by globalization. This observation is valid in the sense that global mass culture (along with "good practices" in education) is certainly being rapidly disseminated, aggressively sold and implanted all over the world (e.g. Burbules & Torres, 2000). However, at the same time the world is growing ever more diversified in terms of economic, ethnocultural, sexual, and a sheer multiplicity of other monochrome and hybrid identities (e.g. Appadurai, 2001; Bauman, 2013; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Pieterse, 2009; Putnam, 2007). These twin currents of increasing cultural uniformity and interconnectedness, on the one hand, and pluralization and sophistication of identities, on the other,—are not mutually exclusive. The constant interplay between these two contesting tides is well reflected on urban social dynamics and education, and translates both into the market and technology-fueled homogeneity as well as into the progressive diversification of local communities.

In fact, diversity has become the new orthodoxy in contemporary cities. It is not just a new setting in public life, but a contested driver for prosperity as well as a source of constant tension (Bauman, 2013; OECD, 2013b; Putnam, 2007). Against this backdrop, cities are increasingly challenged to be places where intergroup encounters can meaningfully occur in a variety of public contexts and where new types of cultural production can take place. In these circumstances the search for shared space is critical for both the global South, where cities are

growing uncontrollably with little or no consideration for the quality of living, and for the global North whose cities are all too often ghettoized and fragmented as a result of individualization and immigration influx (e.g. Keiner et al., 2005; UN Habitat, 2013). This assertion is the prime departure for the choice of my research focus, namely, exploration of third spaces.

Academia-wise, this thesis is situated on the overlap of three academic fields: education, urban anthropology and, in more general terms, sociology seeing that, substantively, I aim to study the public life in urban settings. Among other things, this perspective implies exploring how public life (non-formal learning practices in third spaces being one of its elements) is embedded into the physical space and how this arrangement impacts the quality of living in multicultural societies.

One of the two core concepts in the study is medial or *third* space that creates conditions for positive shared experience of urban living, particularly when enriched with non-formal learning practices. While there is a good number of interpretations for the concept (see section 2.1.2), in this study by third space I understand physical places apart from home and work (or study) that constitute and position themselves as part of the sociocultural landscape. (Within this logic a city park is seen a third space, while a forest is not for it does not belong to the urban domain).

The rationale behind narrowing the focus to non-formal learning (further referred as NFL) practices is two-fold. First, while there are plenty of good city-wide events like festivals of art and sports (e.g. running marathons) that aim to engage and create a shared experience of the city, they are, to a large extent, incidental. This suggests that, unlike cultural *events,* cultural *practices* are more sustained and recurrent (e.g. MISCP, 2013). Second, I limit the scope specifically to *non-formal* learning practices seeing that *informal* learning is too wide and practically synonymous to most daily lived experiences, and *formal* learning is too isolated and self-looped in relation to a wider sociocultural context to be investigated as a critical part of the everyday urban culture. In doing so, I center the attention on open non-formal (i.e. intentional and systematic) practices that help create a shared experience more deliberately, continuously and as part of daily life.

Based upon these premises, my central argument formulated *upon* the data analysis is that NFL learning practices conducted in such third spaces such as libraries, museums, cultural centers, etc. are a strong tool in constructing more cohesive, horizontal and engaging urban environments. Consequently, the development of third spaces and NFL practices in them is a part of a multi-dimensional strategy to make cities more welcoming, enjoyable and interesting places to live in.

Against the global sociocultural circumstances and the assumptions discussed earlier, I seek to explore the values and meanings invested in NFL practices as seen by the providers of third spaces (see section 3.1 and 3.2.1 for the rationale of this perspective).

Secondly, I am concerned with the interaction patterns of these third spaces with and within the sociocultural landscape of the city. These objectives can be reformulated into the following research questions:

- *What meanings and values do the providers of third spaces manifest in their non-formal learning practices and why?*
- *How do the interaction patterns between the city and third spaces reflect and impact the sociocultural landscape of the city?*

These inquiries suggest the sociocultural landscape of the city as a field of operation which, akin to an ecosystem, is not a mass of isolated bits and pieces related to social, political or economic life, but rather an interconnected multi-layered fabric with complex patterns as well as irregularities (Kagansky, 2013; Lefebvre, 1991; Troubina, 2011). In such a formation, what often seems like fragmented phenomena are, in fact, the nodes of a sophisticated flaky pastry texture which, essentially, constitutes the sociocultural landscape. An examination of such landscapes is also one of the central elements for "livability surveys" (three commonly cited examples are Monocle's "Most Liveable Cities Index", the Economist Intelligence Unit's "Liveability Ranking and Overview", and "Mercer Quality of Living Survey").

The sociocultural landscapes I chose for the study are those of Oslo and Moscow. The choice of such diverse landscapes is justified by the fact the phenomena of third space, as well as NFL practices, are core to all pre-modern, modern and postmodern cultures regardless of their geographical location (e.g. Oldenburg, 1999, Putnam, 2007). However, while these are shared

phenomena at the bottom, third spaces and NFL practices are manifold when it comes to implementation at the local level (Rogers, 2007). In this respect, Moscow and Oslo are distinct and interesting cases due to their complex diversity blends, rich and versatile sociocultural landscapes, and the fact that the question of how "to live together when we are all so different" is at the top of political and cultural agendas. This way, two sampled cities may provide a nuanced and contextualized exploration for the phenomenon of NFL practices in third spaces.

1.1   Contextual Background

In the two following sections, I will briefly provide some background to the sociocultural landscapes of Moscow and Oslo in order to situate the study within wider cultural paradigms specific to the sampled cities. Since it is certainly impossible to give an overview of the sociocultural landscapes in a few words I only focus on such contextual departures that, as I further argue, are most relevant to my study.

A straightforward approach in this case would be to compare the sociocultural landscapes with a focus on single-level parameters e.g. immigration impact on diversity or histories of NFL. However, based on my findings it appears more appropriate to highlight certain cultural conditions and attributes that were recurrently referred to by the informants rather than account for the general background. This is why I have decided to set the stage for Oslo and Moscow from somewhat different angles, attempting, however, to equalize the perspectives.

In the account for Moscow, I highlight the center-periphery paradigm and fetishization of a fence, while in the description of the Oslo landscape I refer to the debates around the challenges in building a multicultural society. Above that, in both cases I make remarks on the nature of cultural diversity.

1.1.1   Moscow

Moscow has been historically pictured in the literature as "a fair"[1] or even as "a vanity fair" in the most recent accounts (Oskolkov-Tsentsiper, 2014)—a city of high energy, surcharge,

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[1] For an instance, in *Moscow and Muscovites* by Gilyarovsky (1926).

consolidated money and power. In this regard, one important property of the sociocultural landscape in Russia is the fact that it is largely driven by a center-periphery axis which constitutes a stratified system of meshes where life blossoms in the center and fades away at the margins (e.g. Kagansky, 2013; Medvedev, 2014). Since communication runs hierarchically towards the center, these meshes are loosely connected among each other. Moreover, Kagansky (2013) argues that when looked at from a historical perspective this pattern is reproduced through the times of the Russian Empire, USSR and it is still rendered currently (apparently, such a structural organization is innate to all empires).

The central attribute to such a landscape is well-defined and numerous borders. In practical terms, it is manifested in the fetishization of fences, checkpoints and gates (Medvedev, 2014). For instance, this metaphor depicts a radial-ring spatial layout of Moscow which circumferential symmetry reflects a long history of defense walls, the Kremlin being the most symbolic of them. This urban remembrance is something that might have been transmitted to the current sociocultural landscape through centuries. Seeing that the Kremlin is still used primarily as a governmental establishment, it remains a central metaphor for the pivot of the whole center-periphery metaphor.

With comparison to the landscape of Oslo a smaller scale illustration on how public space interacts with the sociocultural landscape, simultaneously reflecting and shaping, is a cemetery. In Norway it is an organized spacious lawn with simple gravestones, while in Russia it is an unregulated and cramped area with every single piece of land elaborately fenced and locked. It appears that the space between the fences is then often seen as no-mans-land rather than as common, binding or smooth.

One possible way to interpret the culture of fences is to infer the desire to separate and firmly protect oneself from the outside world. It might be assumed that such landscape suggests a mental predisposition towards visual (and, most likely, not only visual) exclusion from the wider society (Medvedev, 2014). It further implies that public space is perceived as strange and threatening, and the exposure to open spaces with fluid or non-existence boundaries is seen as a cause of discomfort at the very least (Kagansky, 2013). This environment, as Kagansky (2013) continues, critically lacks medial zones for public encounter and communication, but in such a demarcated context these open medial third spaces are hard to establish and maintain.

These observations regarding the center-periphery dichotomized relations, the metaphor of fence delineation and a lack of open intermediate spaces are a throughline to my further discussion.

1.1.2 Oslo

Another metaphor reflecting the divide between the landscapes of Oslo and Moscow is taken from my personal experience, and it is an image of curtains. In my vision, Oslo along with Scandinavia in general is a culture of open (and to my sincere admiration—often non-existent) curtains, which can be interpreted as a cultural stance of transparency, clarity and high level of generalized trust (see section 2.2.3.2). In contrast, it is hardly possible to imagine a house without curtains and a solid fence in Russia, a fact that seems to be imprinted in the collective mentality.

It needs to be noted here that my perception of the sociocultural landscape of Oslo is one of an outsider which, on one level, makes my perspective somewhat one-dimensional, but on the other,—allows for a clearer, "zoomed-out" outlook spare from the cultural baggage and sentiments that may cloud the argument. Naturally, the same works the other way around in regard to the positionality towards my native cultural landscape (see section 3.6).

Bearing this bias in mind, I will attempt to briefly draw on currently highly contested discourse in the political, academic and public domains of the Norwegian society,—that is the impact of immigration on the integrity of the Norwegian identity (e.g. Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008). Regardless of my perspective the feasibility and inevitability of "multicultural society project" appear to be a critical sociocultural dilemma in terms of its influence on the urban culture, education and daily experiences of present-day Norway, and Oslo in particular. It is a factor that may impact a morph the levels of generalized trust and perceived security—two of the core social values in Norway (e.g. Ervasti & Ervasti, 2008).

Ultimately, a strong and peaceful welfare state, relatively small class differences and a woman-friendly labor market are among common characteristics of the Norwegian society and most people would not think of Oslo as a place of great cultural diversity (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008). Norway was isolated from the main flows of migration for many centuries and was neither a colonial power nor an empire. In fact, for many years it was primarily a

country of emigration as people were leaving poverty behind for a better life overseas. This and its remote geographical location makes Norway quite a latecomer in attracting immigrants from countries outside Europe (Andersson, 2012; Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008).

Nevertheless, currently Oslo is a home to about 20 percent of residents of non-Western origin[2]. In contrast to migrants in older European empires such as the UK or Netherlands (and, to a certain degree, Russia), the immigrants who started coming to Norway in the late 1960s have no manifest colonial attitude. In this regard, researchers often characterize Norwegian national self-image as marked by innocence (e.g. Andersson, 2012). Memory of Norway's earlier dependent status and the German occupation during the WW2 are important in the national imaginary which, consequently, tends to position Norway as an exception to the Orientalism characteristic to many other European countries during the 19th and 20th centuries (Andersson, 2012). This condition seems to have important implications for the way diversity brought by immigration is perceived for there is no "historically-installed guilt", but rather an act of generosity and good will (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008), which sometimes may translate into a certain power imbalance and a sense of supremacy of the "giver". This keen desire to change and develop the world is indeed a familiar political project to Russia as well (especially in the Soviet times), but the impulse to make a difference seems to have significantly oozed in the last decade or at least morphed.

Multiculturalism is also a familiar and rather contested concept for Moscow, a former imperial capital. However, the nature of cultural diversity in present-day Oslo and Moscow varies. In Oslo it is mostly humanitarian migration from countries far abroad and of no shared history with Norway (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008), and in the case of Moscow it is a flow of the labor force from ex-Soviet republics that used to share a common supranational "soviet" identity (Slon, 2014). However, the two Chechen wars in the 1990s and a strong nationalistic political agenda stimulated the increase of xenophobic sentiments despite the long imperialistic history of proximate multicultural coexistence. Against these conditions in both Moscow and Oslo (and increasingly widespread all across Europe) there is a growing populist right-wing rhetoric of political generalization of immigrants whose culture is

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[2] *Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents*, 2014, Statistisk sentralbyrå Norge. Retrieved from http://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef

criticized for the problems with integration (e.g. Andersson, 2012; "Medvedev asks immigrants not to impose their customs to the native population," 2014).

To summarize, both accounts of the sample cities while approached from seemingly different angles, resonate with one another and are closely related to the phenomenon of a third space (and, by extension, to the NFL practices conducted there) as well as to the perception and accommodation of diversity in the society.

It then appears that the sociocultural landscapes of both sample cities call for third spaces as a means of generating shared values and experiences in the context of increased diversity and pluralization. Throughout the thesis, I argue that by creating shared experiences in the settings of third spaces NFL practices contribute to making the quality of urban living better.

1.2   Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The present chapter has aimed to introduce the contextual background as well as discuss the objectives and relevance of the thesis.

Chapter 2 will situate the study in a wider theoretical setting, present key concepts and make explicit the particular academic discourse within which my study is framed and that is guiding for the analysis of data;

Chapter 3 will provide an outline of the research methodology;

Chapter 4 will present and discuss the findings. Lastly,

Chapter 5 will encapsulate and discuss some of the key inferences in relation to the initial research questions.

2   Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I present the concepts and theories that have guided my exploration of the phenomenon of third space and the culture of NFL around them. I begin with an overview of these two principal concepts, and then proceed by accounting for the main theoretical framework, that is—liquid modernity theory with some of its key attributes specifically relevant to my line of reasoning that I have chosen for the discussion. I further continue with some interrelated theories supporting the inquiry, specifically focusing on such issues as the post-industrial organization of life, globalization, the social construct of a city, and urban diversity.

Before I start a discussion, I find it important to justify my choice of references as, I believe, such decisions expose the integrity of a study as well its fitness into a wider academic discourse.

As I emphasize throughout the thesis, my core theoretical framework is "liquid modernity" formulated by **Zygmunt Bauman**, one of the world's most eminent social theorists writing on such diverse and timeless aspects of human condition as freedom, postmodern consumerism, identity, community, the art of life, and love. The second principal reference to me is **Robert Putnam**, a political and social scientist, regarded as one of the leading authority on the concept of social capital. His 2006 Johan Skytte Prize lecture *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century* was a great inspiration to me during the writing.

While Bauman and Putnam constitute the foundation for the theoretical framework, the second level of references includes the scholars with a narrower focus in relation to this study. They are, for instance, **Ray Oldenburg**—an urban sociologist known for writing about the importance of third spaces for a functioning civil society, and **George Ritzer** with the insights on the patterns of consumption and an elaborate discussion of the McDonaldization phenomenon. Another influential name on the list is **Jan Nederveen Pieterse** whose interpretation of globalization and the concept of hybridity were a powerful impulse for my line of argument.

Thirdly, on many occasions I refer to policy-makers such as **Jacques Delors**, an economist, politician and the co-author of *Learning to Be* (1972) and *Learning: The Treasure Within*

(1996) UNESCO reports and **Dirk Van Damme**, the head of the Innovation and Measuring Progress Division in the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, with regard to his thoughts on the transition from industrial to post-industrial educational paradigms.

Fourthly, in the theoretical chapter as well as later in the discussion I use some secondary data from the selected recent local studies such as the analysis of educational networks (Karovsky, 2013), social construction of marginalization in the city (Andersen & Biseth, 2013), surveys on local communities and middle class lifestyle (e.g. Kuricheva, 2013; Wakhstein, 2011). Additionally, I make use of raw and proceeded statistical data from the SSB (Statistics Norway, www.ssb.no), FOM (Public Opinion Fund, Moscow, fom.ru) and MISCP (Moscow Institute for Socio-Cultural Programs and Research, www.miscp.ru).

Finally, I allude to the practitioners in such fields as urban anthropology, one good example being **Rem Koolhaas** whose thoughts on *placelessness* of public spaces I find particularly fascinating and relevant.

2.1   Conceptual Framework

This section is divided into three parts: the first discusses the notion of learning and NFL in particular, the second part introduces the concept of third space and, lastly, in the third subsection I attempt to align and map both phenomena.

2.1.1   *The concept of non-formal learning*

All educational practices are ideologically informed, socially framed, and culturally contested regardless of whether they are conducted formally or non-formally, in the East or West (e.g. Freire, 1985). Even in the 21st century the tensions between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies of education continue to inform the debate about the purposes of education. Platonic beliefs as a means of strengthening the state are consistent with current neoliberal ideologies of testing, reporting, benchmarking, and other practices of competition. In contrast, Aristotelian ideologies emphasize education for the fulfillment of an individual as well as for the well-being of communities (Barker, 2012; M. K. Smith, 2011). In line with Freire's frame

of reference (e.g. 2000) it is about recognizing the capacity of education to bring about human happiness, and to enable meaningful learning through the engagement in the community.

My standpoint in this study is, therefore, Freiriean and Aristotelian in its roots, meaning that I am of the view that open NFL practices in third spaces have substantial power to contribute to making cities a better place to live, learn and enjoy life.

Another relevant theoretical junction, that I find myself in, is the question of whether educational practices *follow* or *drive* social change. Durkheim and "reproduction theories" after him view education as a condensation of a society's history, social structures etc., thus, following social change (Van Damme, 2013). Whereas, Dewey, Friere and other progressive educators in their footsteps see education as driving social change by stressing its transformative capacities (e.g. Dewey, 1998; Freire, 1985, 2000).

Accordingly, my central thesis in the study is that NFL practices are capable of being a substantial driver for social change. This view was shared among the informants which becomes clear later in the discussion chapter.

Over the last decades, the vocabulary regarding education and learning has undergone some remarkable changes, with an important shift from *education* to *learning* being the most exemplary one (e.g. Delors, 2013; OECD, 2001; Van Damme, 2013). As a result of individualization and pluralization in the society, the notion of education has been moved to the periphery of the academic debate and even obtained a slightly uncomplimentary meaning since it is conceived to refer to patronizing practices and principles (e.g. van der Veen & Wildemeersch, 2012). Learning, counterwise, is strongly connected to the practices of empowerment located in the individual in a fashion implied by, for example, Freire (2000). However, education and learning are often used interchangeably in the literature (e.g. Rogers, 2007, p. 2; Tett, 2006; van der Veen & Wildemeersch, 2012), and for the sake of convenience, the concepts of non-formal leaning and non-formal education are used further in the context of my study synonymously (see also section 3.8).

To situate the concept of NFL within a broader discourse, I take the following definition of learning as guiding for my line of argument:

> (…) human learning is a combination of processes whereby the whole person—body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses)—experiences a social situation, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into a person's individual biography resulting in a changed (or more experienced) person. (Jarvis, 2013, p. 4)

Since this particular definition does not include the value of learning for the common future of the community I would like to highlight this perspective, critical for my further discussion. Therein, NFL practices can be transformative to both an individual as well as for the community, specifically, in a manner that they can "challenge" what is taken for granted in our everyday lives after formal schooling. This is because in the processes of learning in the sense of being interrupted or "being led away from our securities" (van der Veen & Wildemeersch, 2012, p. 12) we are dependent on the presence of others who directly or indirectly invite us to respond to their questions and challenges (e.g. Biesta, 2006a; or Fullan, 2010 for thoughts on the role and value of teachers as "interrupters"). It is through this very response that we "learn to become" and "learn to live with difference" and, as Delors (2013) argues, it is unlikely that such transformations can be an act solely located in the individual.

However, while learning can be seen as intrinsic to any living organism (Jarvis, 2013), the way we learn differs from place to place, from culture to culture and from one individual to another. According to Jarvis (2013, p. 13), this is because "human cognition is not everywhere the same and the members of different cultures differ in their "metaphysics"—fundamental beliefs about the nature of the world".

This way, it appears that by being socialized into different cultures, we acquire many of the hidden complex learning patterns and outlooks that result into us becoming Eastern, Western, Southern, Northern or—even more often—of a hybrid identity (see section 2.2.1.9). The struggle to attract people of diverse backgrounds and create shared points of interest many of my informants explained by these soft-wired cultural dispositions (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Jarvis, 2013), that implicitly and directly shape the development of learning cultures.

Another way to theorize and categorize learning is to look at its modalities in terms of formal, informal and non-formal provision (Rogers, 2007). Within the policy debates there is a common differentiation between these forms (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcolm, 2002; Rogers,

2007; M. Smith, 2001). In the course of life we learn formally at school and university and non-formally in a sheer range of environments (Rogers, 2007) e.g. through a training to acquire work-related skills or by attending a museum lecture for a personal interest. All along, we learn informally i.e. non-purposively in the flow of everyday life e.g. through travel experiences or interaction with others.

There is, however, a considerable overlap among these modalities, sometimes to the degree when the relevance of such division is lost due to the multiplicity of forms and meanings behind NFL practices (Rogers, 2007). For that reason, many scholars and policy-makers have dropped the term NFL and, instead, tend to use the concept of "lifelong learning", which gained strong currency when referring to the totality and diversity of educational practices (e.g. Field, 2006; Longworth, 1999). The value of this highly employed concept is, however, debatable. It is argued that under the conditions of the current economy, lifelong learning is often converted from the right to a duty (e.g. Biesta, 2006b; Jarvis, 2013).

> Whereas in the past lifelong learning was seen as a personal good and as an inherent aspect of democratic life, today lifelong learning is increasingly understood in terms of the formation of human capital and as an investment in economic development (Biesta, 2006b, p. 169)

One important consequence of such a perspective on the value of learning is sidelining certain knowledges as accessory.

> Science, technology and the relevant social and behavioural sciences comprise the spectrum of knowledge that forms the basis of the curriculum: the human sciences have been relegated to leisure time pursuits or even dismissed entirely as not being very relevant. (Han & Jarvis, 2013, p. 1)

It needs to be said that my initial theoretical departure was, in fact,—lifelong learning, and the rationale for this choice was my fascination with the idea of learning as a journey rather than a stage, a set of isolated events or an overture to work life. However, first it was necessary to avoid the initial lifelong learning discourse at the step of data collection, and then abandon it completely when composing the theoretical chapter. This happened partly due to the lack of an elegant equivalent in Russian (which prevented me from referring to the concept in the interviews and following upon it in the media discourse), but primarily because on the folk level "non-formal learning" was more commonly used which made it easier to develop

discussions. While, perhaps, being limiting and outdated (e.g. Field, 2006) NFL discourse allowed for a narrower focus in the particular context of my study. The rationale for the change of vocabulary was, therefore, the fact that lifelong learning not only embraces all possible educational practices making the scope too wide to map, but also, as Biesta (2006b) argues, too often limits learning to the employability needs. Hence, between these two major concerns underpinning the focus on NFL—the need for increased social cohesion and engagement and the need to improve economic competitiveness (e.g. Tett, 2006)—I focus on the first concern.

Interestingly, NFL is an expression in the negative, defining the type of learning by what it is not. This implies a value assumption (implicit or explicit) that one form or another is inherently superior (Colley et al., 2002). NFL, however, is far from being "supplementary", "complementary", "alternative" or "extracurricular"—it is more of an intermediate between informal and formal dimensions.

NFL became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s and was later closely related to the already mentioned concept of lifelong learning. Smith (2001) suggests that whereas NFL has a lot to do with learning throughout life, it is more about the emphasis on, first, structural flexibility and, second, educational practices carried outside the formal system. Nevertheless, NFL practices still entail a very wide spectrum of educational practices. Bearing in mind the extensive areas of overlap between non-formal and formal learning modalities, I attempt to delineate the differences that appear to me as the core[3] (see Table 1).

However, nowadays the distinctions among formal, non-formal and informal learning are thinning obsolete by the reason of a massive crossover in the forms of education within and between institutionalized and open NFL spaces. It is not at all new as there have always been transfers across the three dimensions (certainly there was originally no division at all). For instance, some innovations such as literacy in foreign languages started as typical NFL practice, but in the 1970s became extensively incorporated in school systems (van der Veen & Wildemeersch, 2012). Moreover, many of the now traditional, but back then innovative

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[3] Idealistically this should have been drawn as a figure with three major areas creating a growing body of "liquid" educational forms at the intersection of the three: formal, informal and non -formal.

methodologies of language instruction (e.g. communicative approach, immersions, "teach through play" etc.) also made their way into schools from NFL.

Table 1. *Formal and non-formal learning as competing paradigms*
.

	Formal	**Non-formal**
Purpose	Credential based, preparatory	Based on acquisition of skills and/or curiosity and joy
Timing	Full cycle, structured, sequenced	Flexible, short-cycle, recurrent, occasional
Content	Standardized, testable and measurable	Flexible, environment-driven
Environment	Structured, hierarchical	Informal, flat
Delivery	Teacher-centered, institution-based	Flexible, learner-driven, informal
Control	External, hierarchical	Self-managed, community-based, nonhierarchical

At this point, it is important to mention a long and unique tradition of NFL in Norwegian folk high schools (*Folkehøgskole*), which in the academic circles have been a recurrent example for the "anti-structure" in education (e.g. Paulston, 1979, 1980). However, the present day folk high schools—while still remaining a prominent part of a Nordic tradition in lifelong learning—are privatized and provide opportunities primarily for young adults, offering «a year of a lifetime»: a transitioning-to-adulthood experience (Bagley & Rust, 2009; Harrington, Kopp, & Schimmel, 2013). In this regard, I will briefly focus on the original underpinning principles of NFL in folk schools, rather than on their current manifestation.

Back in 19ᵗʰ century Grundtvig (1783–1872) perceived an expanding gap between life and learning within the Danish formal education being specifically concerned with the development of education that would give dignity to the life of small farmers (Bagley & Rust, 2009). The target clientele was also the reason the folk high schools were residential—it suited their annual rhythm of farm work.

The original folk schools were based on a number of beliefs about human identity. The individual was seen whole only as part of a community, connected to a time, place, and culture. A critical principle was in the rejection of any subject that diverted the aim from the spiritual and cultural development to material considerations and all sorts of examinations were regarded as obnoxious (Bagley & Rust, 2009). This way, the idea of folk high schools has always been to learn for life without concern for grades, to grow both individually, socially, and academically in small learning communities. Vocational competence has never been its primary purpose, but an unintended byproduct. Generally speaking, it was and still is a model of humanistic liberal education. Moreover, folk high schools have always existed outside the mainstream educational structure by deliberate design. In doing so, they have been under neither governmental nor market-driven mandate with regards to ideology, goals, curriculum or pedagogy (Bagley & Rust, 2009; Harrington et al., 2013).

The case of folk schools is by all means fascinating but out of my focus for two major reasons. Firstly as I mention earlier, the present-day folk schools primarily target adolescents and, secondly, folk schools seem to operate within steady and relatively isolated learning communities and do not significantly integrate into the broader cultural landscape of the city.

Having adverted to folk schools that renounce examinations in any from and do not fit into the formal educational system, it is important look at the adverse trend (particularly within the Nordic community) that is the development of national systems that translate informal and NFL experiences into formal credit points (e.g. Werquin, 2010). This, among many other factors, contributes to the disappearance of distinctions between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Even though I fully acknowledge the fading away of borders between formal, informal and non-formal learning (and, indeed, it substantiates an important argument in my further

discussion), I intentionally narrow the focus to educational practices within NFL. I now turn to the second principal concept of my study, namely, third space.

2.1.2 The concept of third space

The concept of a third space is widely used in the academia and beyond (e.g. Oldenburg, 1999; Soja, 1996). It is a part of the core discourse in such fields as anthropology, sociology, geography etc., and it may refer to a number of phenomena such as an escape from work and home (e.g. Oldenburg, 1999), a co-working space (as an alternative to office), space for children's socializing away from home and school and so on. In more abstract terms, it can signify a common ground between cultures e.g. Western and indigenous, Western and Eastern, Southern and Northern, Christian and Islamic, etc. Moreover, it is now common to talk about virtual and hybrid third spaces (see section 4.2.2). Ultimately, the concept of third space is useful in a wide range of discussions and contexts.

In this study, I subscribe to a more general and casual interpretation of the concept suggested by Oldenburg (1999) which implies the social environments separate from the two usual ones of home and workplace. Oldenburg (1999) strongly argues that third places are critically important for civil society, democracy, civic engagement, and establishing a sense of belonging. I slightly alter the original wording and replace Oldenburg's third *place* with a third *space*. Although I am aware that such replacement brings about certain implications (for instance, the mental association of *place* with traditional societies and *space* with modern (e.g. Giddens, 2013), the intention is to highlight potential hybridity and flexibility. Otherwise, I use *place* and *space* interchangeably within the context of my study. Additionally, I narrow down Oldenburg's reading so that it fits the focus on NFL. Below is the original definition.

> Daily life, in order to be relaxed and fulfilling, must find its balance in three realms of experience. One is domestic, a second is gainful or productive, and the third is inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 14).

In this study, I call one's "first space"— home, where informal and non-formal learning happens in the domestic setting. Formal institutions like schools and colleges constitute "the second space". Oldenburg (1999) sees third spaces as having a significant personal effect in

delighting and sustaining individuals and an overall societal benefit in creating better relationships between people. Putnam (1995, 2007) similarly addresses the issues related to third place and their role in urban communities.

Third spaces, as Oldenburg (1999) asserts, are the anchors of community life and means of facilitating broader and more creative interaction among the members. These are level and unpretentious places where one feels equal and welcome, there is a lively conversation, the mood is cheerful, there are regulars who frame a community, it is easy to get to and the hours are convenient and, finally, it has a relatively low profile so that no one would hesitate to enter (Oldenburg, 1999). NFL practices in these places allow people to recharge themselves with emotion, new knowledge and food for thought.

It is needless to say, that all traditional societies have such medial spaces of their own sort. Once upon a time in Oslo and Moscow (as well as practically everywhere across the continent) these were markets, post offices and barber shops etc., while churches, mosques and temples still continue to fulfil this function for millions of people. However, what Oldenburg (1999) emphasized as a new development nowadays is the deliberateness in seeking third spaces as vital to current societal needs. This reflection is critical as it further sustains one of my central arguments (see section 4.3).

Even though both Putnam (1995, 2007) and Oldenburg (1999) rest upon the American context, there seems to be much convergence with both Oslo and Moscow. For instance, in Moscow many of the recently built residential areas have been designed to protect people from the community rather than connect them to it (Grima, 2011; Kagansky, 2013; Medvedev, 2014). Virtually all traditional means of meeting and getting to know one's neighbors are being eliminated, for example, as a consequence of technology replacing human contact in grocery shops or safety considerations preventing parents to let children play in the streets. Above all, actual and imaginary fences—an important cultural code to the Russian context—allows for a near-total protection from those who, in former days, would have been neighbors. In the case of Oslo, it is a different sort of fencing related to the value of privacy and the protection of "authentic Norwegianess" (e.g. Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008).

Oldenburg (1999) claims, that in this new reality third spaces lend a public balance to the increased privatization and individualization of urban life. Along with some urbanists (e.g.

Koolhaas, 1995) Oldenburg (1999) argues that there is a tendency to focus more on creating safe and sanitized areas inadvertently—and in some instances deliberately—reducing the space in which people could meaningfully interact. The practical examples are numerous, and I come back to these sentiments further in the discussion on "placeless" public spaces and Starbuckization (see sections 2.2.3.3 and 4.8.2).

2.1.3   Mapping NFL practices in third spaces

Given the fact that NFL has a good degree of structural flexibility and that third spaces as well as NFL practices are very diverse (ranging from shadow tutoring to business couching) it is hard to draw an accurate map of providers. There are differences in the purposes, characteristics, clientele and in a number of other variables.

In this regard, Colley et al. (2002) argue that the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning and the relationships between them, or the types of practices in a particular modality, can only be understood within particular contexts and for particular purposes. Following this line of thought, in order to provide a sharper sampling lens with a finer defined pool of participants, I composed a context and time-bound map of third spaces where systematic NFL occurs.

Firstly, while third spaces in the urban context are essential for children (first space being home and second—school), and are of a great interest for research, this study looks at third spaces designed primarily for adults. Secondly, the focus falls upon NFL in a physical or hybrid form, which excludes a growing body of virtual NFL communities. Lastly, I emphasize the type of learning where learner's objectives are to experience emotional rewards associated with newly-acquired knowledge, critical food for thought and the passion for the subject rather than a need to improve professionally.

While in reality the dimensions on the list are very complex, in flux and frequently overlap, most of third spaces that offer NFL in Moscow and Oslo seem to fall into one of the following categories:

- Enlightenment or "cognizance" spaces (learning to get a critical and informed understanding of the world);

- Professional and vocational training (learning to become better at a job);

- Supplementary NFL (learning activities "in-between" formal education, that range from private prep schools to NGO programs for education in emergency etc.);

- Compensatory or rehabilitation learning (e.g. integration courses for immigrants);

- Skill development (competence improvement unrelated to job needs);

- Art (learning through expressing oneself through painting, acting, music etc.);

- Leisure (learning though physically designing and creating things);

- Body wellness (learning through own bodily senses);

- Personal development of mystic, spiritual, religious nature (e.g. learning to connect with your inner self at church, ashrams, yoga centers etc.);

- Learning at life transitions or rites of passage (e.g. maternity courses, confirmation rites or a folk high school courses for adolescents).

The first dimension of "enlightening learning" is the focus of this study. It is driven by social, environmental and cultural values rather than vocational or individualistic concerns, and pools together third spaces that aim to shape an intellectual environment and facilitate critical thought in the community, serving in such a way, as arenas for non-formal knowledge production. In the contexts of Oslo and Moscow these places include libraries, museums, public divisions of universities and research institutes, cultural centers, NGO, etc. Needless to say, in the context of the Global South or East the outline of the map, its dimensions and actors may look very different, not least due to the fact that NFL is an essential part of the development discourse (Rogers, 2007).

To sum up, in this section I have presented the two key concepts, that are (1) non-formal learning and (2) third space as well as outlined a pool of participants from which I picked my samples (see section 3.4). The next section presents the core theoretical frameworks employed in the study.

2.2   Theoretical Framework

This section consists of five parts: (1) a general discussion on the mechanisms and impacts of liquid modernity on the urban society and education; (2) an account for some of the attributes to the post-industrial order that characterize the urban life and education nowadays; (3) an

inventory on how globalization impacts the city and education in general and NFL practices in third spaces in particular; (4) an exploration of the meanings and values behind the social production of public space and, by extension, third spaces; and (5) an outlook at the phenomena of diversity in relation to NFL practices in third spaces.

The first section is based majorly on Bauman's ideas, which I will refer to on multiple occasions further in the study. Foremost, I will start with the key thesis of *liquidity* as applied to the analysis of contemporary society in order to capture the dramatic changes taking place in the everyday life. I then continue by employing this framework to the realms of NFL in third spaces.

2.2.1   Liquid modernity

In this study, I draw heavily on Bauman's ideas for they seem to add up and consolidate the attributes and values of NFL practices in third spaces that were suggested by the informants and observed by me during the field trip. Among other matters, Bauman (1998a, 2005, 2013) examines such social processes and phenomena as a culture of individualism, post-industrial and increasingly consumer-oriented world order, de-institutionalization, replacement of human interaction with online social media, and "hurried lifestyles". To a large extent these concerns reflect the ones expressed by my informants and, thus, provide the grounds for a critical discussion further.

Above all, Bauman (2013) highlights the twin social processes of globalization and individualization that fuel liquid modernity. These flows are utterly powerful and closely interrelated as they emerge from a common global setting in which all human activity is bonded together by the individualized free market within which people act as individual consumers rather than collectively as citizens (Bauman, 2013; Davis, 2013). This is essentially a mandatory condition of individuality in which few traditions and institutions remain to anchor identities. It is a familiar story: "capitalism in Marx's understanding similarly spare old solidities to facilitate a universal trafficking of everything, such that you end up having to buy your own identity rather than inherit it by virtue of being born" (Horning, 2012, para. 1).

This way, the first stage of modernity, according to Bauman, is "solid". This is the moment in the history of Western civilization where "solid certainties of pre-modern times had disintegrated to such an extent that the only thing to do was to sweep these rotten underpinnings out of the way completely" (Horning, 2012, para. 1). The goal of this first stage of modernity was to erect its own solid certainties in the place of the ones wiped off by change (one evident example is a dramatic trajectory of the Soviet approach to modernity). Bauman (2013, p. 26) mentions that Orwell's *1984* is a perfect illustration to "what this solid stage of modernity saw as its worst-case scenario".

However, Bauman (2013) does not believe that modernity is over, as the term "post-modern" implies, but that it has morphed. He claims that we are still experiencing modernity with its prevalent features characterized by an obsessive drive for progress, a compulsion to replace the old with something new and better, as well as the belief that a man has unlimited creative powers. But at the same time it is a whole new kind of modernity, different from the one experienced by previous generations (Bauman, 2013). Bauman refers to this second stage of modernity as liquid:

> First of all, society is being transformed by the passage from the "solid" to "liquid" phase of modernity, in which all social forms melt faster than new ones can be cast. They are not given enough time to solidify, and cannot serve as the frame of reference for human actions and long-term life-strategies because their allegedly short life-expectation undermines efforts to develop a strategy that would require the consistent fulfilment of a life-project. (Bauman, 2005, p. 303)

At this stage, there is no more effort and desire to replace a set of old rules, certainties and identities with a new one. The freedom to switch identities as often as we want, move around and transform ourselves is now seen as an end in itself and the most prized characteristic of our existence (Bauman, 2013).

I will now discuss some of the two critical departures to my study which, as Bauman (2005) argues, create a new and challenging setting for education and society as a whole. I will specifically emphasize the properties of liquid modernity that are most relevant to the results of the study such as, sequentially, liquidity in the public life of urban environments and in educational practices.

2.2.1.1   Liquid life in the city

In the context of liquid modernity people seem to be almost solely responsible for micro-managing every aspect of their daily lives which, as Bauman argues, "leads to feeling of isolation and exclusion, and so also fear, anxiety and uncertainty" (Davis, 2013, p. 2). It happens so as social bonds are getting increasingly liquidated, fragmented and weakened, and the experience of urban life accelerated. Akin to all liquids, urban society does not stand still and does not keep its shape for a long time.

> The withdrawal of communal insurance against individual mishaps and ill fortune devalues collective action and indeed the social foundations of solidarity, exacerbating the frailty and impermanence of inter-human bonds. (Bauman, 2005, p. 304)

Such social security nets no longer deserve time and effort of investment and, moreover, a sacrifice of immediate individual interests. Bauman further (2005, p. 304) argues that such a condition of excess commodities and labor markets "inspires and promotes divisions, not unity". He critiques a pragmatic priority of competitive spirit and downsizing of collaboration and teamwork to the rank of temporary measures that are to be suspended the moment their benefits have been taken advantage of.

> Individualism is triumphant. No one, or almost no one, believes any longer that changing lives of others has importance for him or her. No one, or almost no one, believes that voting may change significantly his or her condition, and so the condition of the world. (Bauman, 2005, p. 307)

Interestingly, Norway might remain among the few "Red Listed" societies which maintain a great deal of idealistic hope and desire to make a difference in the world.

The condition of the decline of traditional relationships in liquid modernity is, in a way, a truism. In line with Bauman, Delors (2013, p. 327) notes that "all too often we find ourselves lost in "the lonely crowd", he further links this feeling of being the sole judge of oneself with the decline of religion, pointing out, however, that it is not the sole reason. It is, as he continues,

> a matter of people no longer seeing themselves as part of the community to which they belong, and the loss of the discipline and solidarity that go hand in hand with

that". (….) The individuals who are more lost than anyone else and removed from their usual environment the ones experiencing the most disruption because of these changes and the complexity of their situations, have a huge need to be acknowledged (Delors, 2013, p. 328).

The concern of the acknowledgement of those at the margins of society will be principal for many stories further in the discussion chapter. I will look at how the metaphor of liquidity can be applied to analyze the current condition of education.

2.2.1.2   Liquid education

Here is how the phenomenon of education in liquid modernity is interpreted by one of the Bauman's scholiasts:

> Liquid education is an educational philosophy (…) that dismantles previous higher learning and pursues temporary, tentative and unarranged bits of knowledge and helpful competences. It is the un-authoritative activity of learners that, lacking cultural purpose and rational framework, operates outside the bounds of structure in the service of the market. (Oxenham, 2013, p. 21)

Bauman (2005) argues that in a liquid-modern setting the domains of teaching and learning are subjected to de-institutionalizing pressure which puts the value of flexibility above the inner logic of scholarly disciplines.

It is of note that my initial impulse to turn to the liquid modernity theory came from the observation regarding "de-institutionalization processes" mentioned by one of the informants out of any alignment to Bauman's ideas (see section 4.2).

> Pressures come from above—from the governments' eager to catch up with market imperatives, as much as from below—from prospective students exposed to the equally capricious demands of labor markets and bewildered by their apparently haphazard and unpredictable nature. (Bauman, 2005, p. 316)

However, there seem to be another perspective on the way how knowledge production and education operate in the liquid modernity, which runs somewhat counter to Bauman's vision of pointillist and dispersed terrain.

The partition of academic subjects in universities, in fact, happened not that long time ago, around the turn of 19th century (Burke, 2000). A rapid development of scientific thought and technology triggered the fragmentation of knowledge under the banner of "learn more and more about less and less." And as the drive to subdivide the natural world into smaller and smaller bits brought the development of tools (microscopes, telescopes, thermometers, etc. required to measure data), disciplines sliced into subdisciplines and sub-subdisciplines.

> As a result, isolated in their intellectual silos, scientists and their technological sidekicks literally "reduced" human knowledge to myriad, mutually incomprehensible pinpoints of niche expertise. And not just at the gizmo level. Now and again, deep in the epistemological woodwork, mind-numbingly arcane fields mix and mingle to produce cosmic upheaval with startling new realms of crossbred knowledge: astrophysics, biogeography, psychopharmacology, neurochemistry, paleobotany. (Burke, 2000, para. 7)

Similar process, but at a lower speed and amplitude, seems to have happened to the domain of humanities as well. It may be presumed that this splitting phase belongs, in Bauman's terms, to the solid stage of modernity. However, alongside with this ongoing mitosis, there appears to be a tendency to liquefy and compound the contours of academic cooperation in knowledge production. This can be evident on the success stories of such interdisciplinary research institutes as MIT Media Lab or Aalto University, where research and educational projects are conducted in teams composed of experts from very varied fields (see section 4.2 for the examples from my data). This discussion only proves that the liquid-modern educational paradigm is far too complex to be black-and-white and, if anything, it is all fifty shades of grey.

One critical attribute to education in liquid modernity is a shift of emphasis from *teaching* to *learning* that moves to individual students "the responsibility for the composition of the teaching-learning trajectory and, obliquely, for its pragmatic consequences" (Bauman, 2005, p. 316). It also reflects a growing hesitation among learners to make long-term commitments that limit the future scope of options and restrict the area for manoeuver. Further, it is "a gradual yet relentless replacement of the orthodox teacher-student relationship with the supplier-client, or shopping-mall-shopper pattern" (Bauman, 2005, p. 317). The latter condition was articulated by the informants both in the spirit of concern and approval depending upon the context.

Ultimately, these are the social setting "in which today's educators find themselves bound to operate" (Bauman, 2005, p. 317, 2013). I will now turn to discuss the social circumstances that frame the phenomenon of NFL in third spaces within the liquidity modernity theory. I will in particular discuss the impact of post-industrial world order, globalization, social construction of space in the city and urban diversity. These attributes of the contemporary society were also brought up by the informants in a variety of contexts that I successively bring up in the discussion chapter later.

2.2.2   Post-industrial order

The argument of urgency in adapting to the realities of post-industrial order was recurrent in the interviews. Among other issues, my informants referred to the quality of pastime practices in the city, digitalization of education and human interaction and the power of media. In the first section I elaborate on some of theoretical underpinnings for the post-industrial urban lifestyles.

If we look back, it is fascinating how many of the industrial age (or in Bauman's terms, solid modernity) phenomena such as a nuclear family, urbanization or mass education now seem axiomatic. However, these self-evident things had intended objectives and functionality. For instance, in *Third Wave* Toffler (1989) examined the emergence of such phenomena as mass education. This short digression is important to my argument as it shows the historical origins of formal education and highlights its differences from NFL.

According to Toffler (1989, Chapter 2), at some point in the booming industrialization manufactures realized that the majority of their workers—former farmers and tinkers—were challenging to teach punctuality, conformity and factory routine labor. This was when mass education based on the factory model emerged. Basic literacy, arithmetic and bits of other academic knowledge formed the core curriculum, but there was a much more profound hidden curriculum implanting absolute compliance, routine work, not questioning authority and a habit of performing tasks with a strict reference to time (e.g. lesson periods and the bell). Contemporary formal education has inherited a great deal from that industrial model.

Toffler's (1989) central thesis is that since the late 1950s there has been a shift away from the Second Wave Society into what he calls the Third Wave Society, one based on knowledge as

a primary resource. This idea echoes similar concepts of the Information Age or Global
Village (McLuhan, 1962) which all predicted demassification, diversity, knowledge-based
production, and the acceleration of change. In this post-industrial society, there is a wide
diversity of lifestyles and subcultures, fluid and responsive to change.

Industrial	Educational provision	Standardization and uniformity	Confined in time and space	Vertical accountability	Formal education centered	Linear concepts of learning	"Learning to the test"
Post-industrial	Supported learning	Personalization and flexibility	Time and space independent	Horizontal accountability	Continuum from formal to informal learning	Non-linearity	"Joy of learning"

Figure 1. Transitions from industrial to post-industrial education

Note: Adapted from *21st Century Learners Demand Post-Industrial Education Systems* (Van Damme, 2013).

Van Damme (the head of OECD Directorate for Education and Skills) views post-industrial
education similar to the Toffler's perspective (see Figure 1). Such things as joy of learning,
non-routine skills, and continuum from formal to informal learning were also recurring in
how the informants defined NFL (see section 4.1).

In the next sections I will elaborate on the four elements of the post-industrial world that have
specifically influenced NFL practices in third spaces (Bauman, 1998a, 2013; Putnam, 2007).
These factors are, namely, the emergence of disposable cultures, sharp increase of free time,
the power of media and information technology and the digitalization of social life.

2.2.2.1   Disposable cultures

> Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place.
>
> —The Red Queen hypothesis[4]

Another attribute of a liquid society, as recurrently discussed in Bauman's work (2005, 2013) has, in fact, become common place to critique. It is the emphasis on the disposal of things rather than on their appropriation. This social condition reflects the logic of a consumer-enslaved economy where the desire to *acquire* and *collect* is overruled by the urge to *discard* and *replace* (Bauman, 2005, 2013). People sticking to yesterday's laptops, cell phones, clothes, and habits would "spell disaster for an economy whose main concern and the condition *sine qua non* of survival is a rapid and accelerating acquisition of purchased products and their subsequent consignment to waste, and for which swift waste disposal is a cutting-edge industry" (Bauman, 2005, p. 308). A similar "expiry date" approach further extends to such abstract things as personal relationships and knowledge production (Bauman, 2013).

In the modern "hurried cultures" (Bertman, 1998) everything is changing at a breath-taking momentum, and knowledge is practically "ageing" at the speed of light while "new knowledge is born only to start aging right away" (Bauman, 2005, p. 314). The rule of the loosely integrated and multi-centered liquid world ensures that each life project will require yet another set of skills and bits of information, invalidating the skills already obtained and the information already memorized (Bauman, 2005). When applied to the analyses of urban and educational contexts, it implies that we tend to experience life as a series of disconnected episodic moments.

> Loading oneself with information, absorbing and retaining information, struggling for a completeness and cohesion of the information stored—it all looks suspiciously like offering oneself as a dumping site for prospective waste, and thus like an outrageous waste of time (Bauman, 2005, p. 314).

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[4] From *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871) by Lewis Carroll. The Red Queen hypothesis is an evolutionary hypothesis which suggests that organisms must constantly adapt, evolve, and proliferate not merely to gain reproductive advantage, but also simply to survive while pitted against ever-evolving opposing organisms in an ever-changing environment ("Red Queen hypothesis," 2014).

Put differently: when a growing body of information is distributed at accelerating speed, it becomes increasingly harder to meaningfully sequence narratives, orders and ideas. Among other things, it also leads to the loss of monopoly and gatekeeping of knowledge by traditional institutes, which brings radical challenges the teaching profession. All these, as Bauman (2005) argues, has serious consequences to the way we relate to knowledge, work and lifestyle in a wider sense. These insights have a direct relevance to my analysis as it seems to accurately portray the way knowledge is produced and disseminated within NFL practices in third spaces.

2.2.2.2   The power of free time

The second important aftermath of the transition from industrial to post-industrial age is a change in the interaction patterns between the individual and the city and, in particular, with regard to an acute increase of free time. Majorly, it is a result of a growing middle class with relatively high income, social packages, advances in home appliances and, consequently, mass of free time (Toffler, 1989). Their daily schedules now significantly deviate from a conventional pendulum pattern (home-work-services (e.g. grocery) and back home), as daily traffic scenarios nowadays are much more varied, and people are often making trips in a "daisy-chain" pattern. These very people generate a broad market for new third spaces and place high demands on the quality of urban life, in particular, the quality of their after-work pastime ("The new oases," 2008[5]).

In this respect, a recent survey conducted in Moscow is of note (Plischnyak, 2014). It concludes that while a newly-established middle class is actively involved in various leisure and educational activities it is not, however, the result of a formed lifestyle innate to the middle class in Europe, but rather a consequence of a relatively high income in the last five years. In relation to my study, this observation adds up to the picture of an aggressive consumer culture developed in the 1990s in Russia and, as a counterbalance,—recent saturation with "shopping mall lifestyle" and anti-consumerist sentiments traced in the traditional and social media.

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[5] From The Economist, Apr 12th, 2008, special report: Mobility

2.2.2.3   *The cult of the present minute*

Another relevant by-product of the post-industrial age is the rise and influence of the media and new information technologies, along with two unfortunate, as Delors (2013) points out, consequences: the "cult of the present minute" and the "emotional society". The cult of the present minute is also an attack on education because it stimulates the loss of memory and desire to dream the future (Delors, 2013).

In a similar vein, Bauman (2005) discusses the concept of "culture of immediacy", where time is neither circular (like in many traditional Asian cultures) nor linear (as in enlightened western thought of progress), but progressively "pointillist[6]" i.e. broken into a multitude of separate morsels (Bauman, 2013) . This culture is clearly liquid as it lacks secure points of reference and does not encourage a desire to learn and amass, but rather seems to be one of distancing, disconnection and oblivion (Bauman, 2013). Under those conditions, the city's public space and social cohesion look threatened.

Furthermore, there is "the emotional society". Every day when we switch on our televisions or rather open a Facebook page,

> we see the trials and tribulations of life, people are crying, people are moved, sometimes they donate one euro or ten, and that's that. Emotion is replacing compassion, and emotion often makes people forget about solidarity (Delors, 2013, p. 328).

Based on these concerns I see the importance of third spaces in the city as arenas for both "learning to be" and "learning to live together".

2.2.2.4   *Digitalization*

Following the above line of argument, there is one more important consequence of the post-industrial age—digitalization of, particularly, education and third spaces—the social domains that previously involved human interaction and mixing as their foremost principle. In this sense, Bauman (2013) emphasizes a growing preference for "online" rather than "offline" life,

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[6] Pointillism is a technique of neo-impressionist painting using small, distinct dots of various pure colours, which become blurred in the viewer's eye. The key names in this genre are Georges Seurat and Paul Signac.

fed by the multiplicity of opportunities to replace face-to-face contact with multifarious screens in the course of everyday life.

Whereas the process of digitalization, undoubtedly, has a tremendous impact of the whole field of education, I will specifically focus on the non-formal dimension. As it becomes evident later from my findings, even with a focus specifically on physical spaces, the question of how technology (e.g. in the form of MOOCs) penetrates education and impacts the way people learn non-formally has been brought up by the informants on multiple occasions.

The stance I am taking here is that innovative pedagogies can be technology-rich, but technology, no matter how advanced, is a tool and not a goal in itself. This viewpoint was largely shared by the interviewees as well as by many scholars, educators and policy makers (e.g. Fullan, 2010; Van Damme, 2013). In particular, Fullan (2010) stresses that digitalization is one of the key "false drivers" in education and Van Damme (2013, para. 6) goes further and warns that "technology can even lead to regressive pedagogy".

2.2.3 *Globalization*

> Symbols of all kinds have detached themselves from their original roots and float freely, like dandelion seeds, around the world. (Anderson, p.89 as cited in Pieterse, 2009, p. 143)

Globalization, in a sense, is a prism in which the main disputes over the collective human condition are now viewed. It impacts all facets of our life and is one of the most obvious of contemporary conditions, and one that was recurrently brought up by the informants in relation to education and public space in the city. Needless to say, the term evokes many controversies and a multitude of possible interpretations, some of which I discuss below.

For instance, David Harvey (1989) stresses the effects of time–space compression that ultimately alters the qualities of and the relationship between space and time. It occurs as a result of technological innovations that condense or remove spatial and temporal distances. Examples are the internet, jets and, not least, the need to overcome spatial obstructions in order to open up new markets, speed up production cycles, and reduce the turnover time of the capital.

Many, including some of the informants, think of globalization as a synonym to westernization (Giddens, 2013, p. 64), while others believe that no single theory can describe the complexity of the current world for no theory can be absolute, and because societies are "much messier than theories on them" (Appadurai, 2001). For that reason, Appadurai's shifts focus to globalization's cultural dimensions as opposed to economic. He then looks at globalization in terms of both homogenization and heterogenization, arguing that migration and the media create both sameness as well as difference, and migrating ideas and symbols produce different sociocultural landscapes in different localities (Appadurai, 2001). This way, he explores irregularities as much as regularities in the globalized world. I find Appadurai's line of argument of relevance for my research as it highlights multiple and often conflicting outcomes of globalization. Pieterse (2009) and Bauman (1998b) express similar insights.

> Globalization cuts both ways. Not only does it valorize the local in a cultural sense, it constructs the local as the tribal. (Bauman, 1998b, p. 37)

This is in line with one of Toffler's key anti-evolutionist maxims that "change is non-linear and can go backwards, forwards and sideways" (1989, p. 3).

2.2.3.1   Polar worlds

Throughout the interviews, another particular aspect of globalization was brought up repeatedly—the polarization of the world. In the case of Moscow, the informants tended to allude to East-West osmosis, while in Oslo the discussion often went around the divide between the homogenous majority and highly diverse "others".

Apparently, East and West is a classic divide that once gave rise to Orientalism. "This divide is deeply ambivalent, oscillating between attraction and repulsion" (Pieterse, 2009, pp. 125–127). It reflects a binary division of the world politics readapted globally after "9/11".

In Russia the discourse on a historic Western and Eastern split is very culturally and politically charged[7], not to mention extensively exploited in the recent political discourse. In

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[7] Since the early 19th century, the central divide in Russia has been between Slavophiles and Westernizers. The latter wanted Russia to be part of the European civilization and to adopt modern democracy. The Slavophiles, meanwhile, saw Russia as separate and special. They regarded the West with suspicion, accusing it of meddling and insisting that the government ban damaging foreign influences ("Putin's Slavophiles Gain Over Westernizers | Opinion," 2012).

this regard Pierterse (2009) asserts that it is an artificial and polemic divide and a cultural posture, rather than a description of reality. In a similar fashion, the media and policy may be powerful in the construction and judgmental labeling of certain social groups in the society. I return to the discussion on socially constructed identities later (see section 4.3).

Examining East-West (or South-North) relations in a historical perspective shows that "globalization goes in circles: East-West, West-East, East-West and so on" (Pieterse, 2009, pp. 123–136). Therefore, the osmosis (or, as Pieterse refers to it, hybridization) is layered. These layered and circular developments and influences are visible to the naked eye, for instance, in many places in the Middle East where hybridities are so intricately braided and interlaced that it is utterly impossible to decide on the origins.

2.2.3.2   *Hybrid cultures*

I find "hybridity" of a great interest to my general inquiry as all third spaces are inherently hybrid in their attempt to serve as "melting", "mixing" or "meeting" arenas for increasingly diverse urban population. It is a prominent theme for it concurs with a world of intensive intercultural communication, increasing migration, diaspora communities in big cities and everyday multiculturalism. The two latter issues are particularly important for further discussion (see section 4.3).

Hybridization as a phenomenon is a binary to cultural differentialism of racial and nationalist doctrines because "it takes as its point of departure precisely those experiences that have been marginalized" (Pieterse, 2009, p.55). It denies a gestalt approach to cultures which sees them as wholes that can only be understood in their entire configuration and that have no space for margins, subcultures and countercurrents. The theory of hybridization, on the contrary, subverts nationalism because it privileges border-crossing. It rejects identity politics such as ethnic or other claims to authenticity because it principally accepts the fuzziness of boundaries (Pieterse, 2009). Such cut-'n'-mix experiences in consumption, lifestyles and identities are ordinary and everyday (Pieterse, 2009, pp. 55–80).

However, spaces of hybridization are not necessarily smooth but are frequently edgy, which is illustrated by the whole history of colonization (Pieterse, 2009). Examples of such edginess of proximity to my study are, for instance, invisible cultural border zones between East and West

Oslo or, on a more global scale, newly established and highly edgy borders between Russia and Ukraine as a result of the March 2014 political gamble. This last example is striking in the sense that it illustrates how previously smooth hybrid zones of Crimea and East Ukraine can be transformed into the war frontiers in a blink of an eye primarily by means of the mass media. This speed of light change from smooth towards edgy texture of hybridization also adheres to Harvey's (1989) theory of time-space compression, and from a metaphysical perspective relates to the metaphor of borders and fences in the Russian context (see section 1.2.1).

A discussion on hybridization brings up a new dialectics of borders. In the context of this study informants often referred to the erosion of such borders as ones among academic subjects, modalities of learning, objectives, etc. Pieterse (2009) argues that increasing transnationalism in communication, production, consumption and travel goes together with the emergence of new borders (as in rising restrictions on migration) and new politics of risk containment (as in relation to the conflict zones in the above example of Russia and Ukraine). As some borders fade, new external and internal emerge. Further, the benefits associated with the dissolution of boundaries are not evenly distributed. In this context, contemporary globalization can be understood as a process of hierarchical integration in which integration fosters "borderlessness", while hierarchy imposes new boundaries and forms of stratification (Pieterse, 2009, Chapter 2).

Ultimately, as I argue in this section globalization often leads to ambiguous and conflicting consequences. It stimulates a wide range of discussions, some of which are of close relevance for my study of third spaces. Apart from the observations above such consequences may concern the rise of neoliberal thinking in education and the integration of diaspora communities (Pieterse, 2009).

To obtain a better understanding of globalization and hybridization processes it is important to explore the distinctions and nuances among various patterns, times, types and styles of mixing, or in other words,—look at the mechanics of glocalization.

Glocalization is basically a portmanteau of globalization and localization which describes an outcome of local conditions toward global pressures. "It is an interpretation of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographical areas" (Ritzer, 2013, p. 167).

It is a concept closely related to hybridization but with a focus on specific global patterns distorted in local reality. A great variety of phenomena can be examined through this prism of and particularly in education there is a substantial body of literature (to name just a few, Burbules & Torres, 2000; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000).

2.2.3.3 McDonaldization

McDonaldization is a metaphor that fits well into the globalization theory (Ritzer, 2013) and, in that sense, is also a facet of liquid modernity for it implies a multidirectional flow of people, objects, products and ideas driven by inflated consumer lifestyles as well as a unification and primitivization of tastes. McDonaldization can be defined as:

> (…) a process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of our society (Ritzer, 2013, p. 1).

Along with Ritzer (2013), Pieterse (2009, pp. 51–54), Bauman (2013) and many other thinkers heavily criticize the ideology and consequences of McDonaldization, mainly for its dehumanizing nature.

From an educational angle, the phenomenon entails homogenization and, ultimately, commodification of knowledge to suit everyone's taste and ability (Bauman, 2005). This knowledge is swallowed on the way—"quickly eaten, quickly forgotten" (Delors, 2013). Those fragmented but delicious information bits have a short shelf-life and a 'use-by' date.

> (…) it is better to think of knowledge as offered and consumed in small bites, each one separately cooked and quickly chewed and digested, and then just as quickly vacated from the digestive track, clearing the space for further portions. Further, it is better to think of knowledge production and consumption after the pattern of fast food, prepared rapidly and eaten fresh, hot, and on the spot, rather than in terms of haute cuisine's meticulous composition and laborious cooking of dishes that need a long time of rest and settle before being fit for consumption. (Bauman, 2005, pp. 315–316)

McDonaldization is a variation of the theme of universalism and cultural diffusion or global cultural synchronization (Pieterse, 2009). The phenomenon has been showered with many creative nicknames such as *coca-colonization* or *ikeanization*. It is comparative simplicity and lack of distinctiveness that appeal to a wide range of tastes (like clean lines of Ikea furniture).

McDonaldization also falls within the general framework of evolutionism—"a single track universal process of evolution through which all societies, some faster than others, are progressing" (Pieterse, 2009, p. 51).

Ritzer suggests (2013) that McDonald's success is found in its efficiency (a wide range of goods and services available to wider population than ever before), calculability (fast and inexpensive food), predictability (uniformity across the globe and no surprises) and control through non-human technology. These dimensions are simultaneously advantages and disadvantages depending on the perspective (Ritzer, 2013). One may "mcdonaldalize" life in a variety of often unconscious ways by using Lonely Planet guidebooks, buying package tours, enjoying easy "click & grow" gardening, participating in "drive-through democracy", taking a MOOC course along with a thousand of peers and so on.

In the context of this study, "Starbuckization" is, in fact, a more relevant metaphor. It is still fundamentally the same exact process of McDonaldization, but with an important distinction: Starbucks positions itself as a third space (Ritzer, 2013, pp. 171–176). In fact, it is also increasingly seen as an important cultural force and phenomenon (Walton, 2012) as it has altered the way many people live. For instance, many commuters plan their trips to work on the basis of where the most convenient Starbucks is to be found (Ritzer, 2013).

However, I stand on the point that Starbucks is a fake sort of third space. The chain, that started in Seattle, and is now hard to avoid anywhere. "Starbucks admits that as it went global it lost its ambiance of a "home away from home" (The Economist, 2008, para. 4). They become akin to such *placeless* and generic public spaces as airports, shopping malls and entertainment hubs whose "power of newness and the freedom from the burden of history celebrate the culture of neoliberal design" (Koolhaas, 1995). Beyond that, Starbucks prioritizes a ready access to an electrical outlet and wifi as more important than whoever else might be there. It surely complies with all Mc-principles and, this way, contributes to the loss of local identity of third spaces. In this regard, Ritzer (2013, pp. 171–176) makes an example of Taiwan where Starbucks is currently playing a major role in the disappearance of its distinctive tea shops and tea culture.

2.2.4 City as a social construct

Since 2008 the majority of the world's population lives in urban agglomerations and by 2030, the proportion is likely to exceed 60 per cent (OECD, 2013b; UN Habitat, 2013). This generates a great academic interest in ethnographic and postmodern accounts of the city with a focus on differences, particularly, in patterns of consumption, diversity and urban lifestyles. Urbanization also evokes a discussion on the city as a spatial and social phenomenon, as an idea, a construction of the popular imagination and a metaphor.

For a simple illustration of popular imagination, one may try to visualize the New York skyline. Most probably, the picture will scream of symbols related to power and capitalism—an iconic and internationally recognized image.

> NY is driven by a combination of single-minded leadership about what the city is: an eclectic mixture of people, all of whom, regardless of sex, age or creed, have the potential to realize their dream—if they work at it. NYC means a "can-do" attitude that manifests itself in everything from towering skyscrapers to customer service (Salman, 2008, para. 4).

In contrast, the representation of Saint Petersburg will likely be inspired by the motifs from classic literature and evoke melancholy. Moscow would radiate an image of a fair (Troubina, 2011) and Oslo will perhaps be associated with peace and blissful stillness of the forest. This way cities can be perceived both as the actual physical environment as well as the space we experience in literature, movies, design, ideology and practically through all human senses.

The use of metaphors in urbanism has a long tradition (e.g. city as a garden or musical harmony). This is because the way that we conceive of cities can serve as the quintessential expression of how we experience urban living. Understanding the city metaphorically means viewing it in terms of schemas and structures of other domains of human experience projected onto the more ambiguous phenomenon of the city. These conceptions are indications of a public imaginary that is influenced by our history, culture, technology, the media, and so on.

Metaphors of the city were not on the agenda for my study and are not, therefore, included in the discussion chapter. However, while on the subject, I will use the opportunity to depart from rules and illustrate the above speculation on public imaginaries and metaphors with a voice from the field.

When reflecting upon the future of NFL one of my informants adverted to the original idea of European university that was conceived as an open learning space (interview, Moscow, September 2013). She shared an observation that all the universities in Moscow are somewhat classified with an admission through toll gates (which echoes the metaphors of fences discussed in the introduction chapter). Even the Moscow State University which is de jure open to everyone is de facto rather unwelcoming to outsiders. "The idea of our public program is, in this sense, an attempt to see the whole city as an open campus and claim parks, museums and other public spaces as temporary auditoriums open to everyone" (interview, Moscow, September 2013).

A less romanticized but much more frequent metaphor of Moscow is "the big office"[8] with its chilling resemblance to Lang's *Metropolis*[9]. This perception was recurrent in the interviews and media publications, and is a recently developed element of the public imaginary (Troubina, 2011). While it would likely sound dystopian for someone used to the Oslo way of life, those living in *the office* are satisfied for "they see the main objective of the city in providing supportive conditions for money making" (Troubina, 2011, p. 51).

"The office" is apparently a common metaphor for the lifestyle in many contemporary cities. Despite the variety of functions that cities can perform in principle (ranging from religious to social) with the emergence of industrial society all of them have been majorly subordinate to one primary ambition—accumulation of capital (Troubina, 2011). Later in the 1970s the crisis of Fordist capitalism stimulated flourishing of "the new industry" like Silicon Valley or the Third Italy—regions in which national hierarchies gave way to network-based relations (Putnam, 2007), and it seems that now most western cities are following this route. My data also suggests that, in its own pace, the field of education is moving in the same direction (see section 4.5).

Not metaphorical but real city has always been a highly dichotomized place where evil and despair contrasted with the wealth and high culture (Bauman, 2013). Some of the main qualitative changes of recent decades, as Bauman (e.g. 2013) argues, are those generating the

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[8] *Monitoring of public imaginaries, metaphors and associations about Moscow*, 2011, Public Opinion Fund, Retrieved from: http://fom.ru/obshchestvo/27

[9] *Metropolis* is a 1927 German expressionist epic science-fiction film directed by Fritz Lang. It is set in a futuristic and sharply segregated urban dystopia.

greatest unease: wide scale digitalization (distant and virtual replacing closer physical contacts), intensified use and often abuse of public space for the purposes of consumption, increased volume and pace of all types of flux related to commerce, proliferation of messages and symbols (e.g. though advertising) and growing tendency towards individualism (del Pozo, 2008). With these concerns in mind, Bauman (2013) emphasizes the importance of "mixing" capacity of the urban physical space and heavily criticize the policies that homogenize neighborhoods and reduce all communication to an inevitable minimum, providing a freeway to stimulate and intensify segregation and exclusion.

At this point, it is of relevance to highlight the common socialist background of Oslo and Moscow, which nowadays is clearly much more subtle and much less idealistic, particularly in the latter city. However, it is still evident, for instance, in the way how Moscow up to date has not yet developed ethnic ghettoized neighborhoods typical for most contemporary capitals in the global West and North (e.g. HSE Research Institute for Demographics, 2014), and to a certain degree to Oslo (e.g. Sæter, Bergaust, & Aure, 2013).

The urban layout itself can lead to inequality of conditions and the processes of exclusion can be not necessarily deliberate, but often an outcome of market-driven decisions justified by economic value. One example of such social and physical divide is, as Sæter (2013, p. 39) illustrates, the high-rise buildings in Bjørvika, which the residents of Gamle Oslo (an old neighborhood nearby) "see as a wall between them and the fjord" that creates makes them literally a "neighborhood in the shade". While it is an example from architecture, it translates into social and cultural organization of the city as well.

It is claimed that the feel of the city and sense of belonging to it only comes from shared experience, and this hardly happens if the urban space is not shared in the first place. Bare juxtaposition does not create a city, but simply a depository of individuals (del Pozo, 2008).

> The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. (….) It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. (Harvey, 2010, p. 315)

This way, third spaces work as an important counterbalance, helping to generate the environments of participatory and interactive public life and build a stronger sense of urban community. Above all, theorization of the city as a social construct means viewing and studying it as an experience of collective cohabitation rather a physical form.

2.2.4.1 Social production of public space

Lefebvre (1991) argues that all social space, at all scales of consideration, is produced (implying that the only "unproduced space" is the one created by nature). In this sense, urban space is a complex social construction based on values and the social production of meanings (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre, therefore, asserted that a city cannot be understood as a simple agglomeration of people and things in an abstract space. Furthermore, along with earlier expressed ideas of Bauman (2013), Putnam (1995, 2007) and Oldenburg (1999) Lefebvre seeks to create awareness of social space as produced by the state and by capitalism, and he calls repeatedly for the recovery of "authentic" spaces that are neither commodified nor oppressed, but yet are not simply "leisure spaces".

Often it is assumed that public space (third spaces being inherently public) is as a kind of vacuum—open and empty space which can accommodate some buildings, objects of art, monuments, commercial advertising, political propaganda, and many other things (Groiss, 2012). Private spaces are then understood as closed and protected (such a perception is specifically innate to Moscow in contrast to Norway where the nature by law belongs to everyone and people can even camp in the private garden). In the case of Moscow it is a question whether such an understanding of public space can actually construct the social life of the community, stimulate generalized trust and fellow-feeling in the society.

Groiss (2012) argues that public life is in the interaction, cooperation or mild confrontation, but in the first place, it is found in the experience of "exposure" or public "self-display", and it is through this exposure that we become part of a community. However, an individual moving across modern public spaces is absorbed with her/his private interests and concerns. Crowds on the streets and city traffic are experienced mainly as something bothersome on the way. In this regard, Moscow and Oslo differ significantly; this observation is something I return to further in the discussion chapter (see section 4.5.3).

Moreover, the crowd on the street is often a rather lonely crowd which does not constitute a community. Exceptions are street festivals, rallies and demonstrations (regardless of whether we look at experiences of Oslo or Moscow). These public events actualize the empty space and temporarily generate a strong sense of community and belonging through creating shared experience. Some ordinary examples of such events are 17th of May in Oslo, the commemoration processions after 22 July 2011, or political rallies in Moscow in 2011-2012. NFL practices in third spaces are, then, public spaces that strive to generate such community feeling on a more permanent basis.

In the next section, I will discuss one of the most frequently mentioned challenges for the formation of third spaces, namely, diversity.

2.2.5 *Urban diversity*

Processes of migration have brought a dazzling diversity to cities, creating new conditions and challenges to both public life and education. The control of these migration processes is one of the major issues for policymakers in Western cities today. However, cities do not transform exclusively because of migration. There is also an increased diversity as a result of individualization and pluralization processes (Bauman, 2013; Putnam, 2007) and the disappearance of old forms of social integration often entails the development of new social dynamics and patterns.

The cities are centers of a constant flow of people, which results in the erosion of distinctions between permanent and temporary migrants, economic migration and asylum-seekers, and between countries of origin and countries of destination. Some see the thrill and positive energy in those changes; others have considerable doubt about the idea of a multicultural society as an enriching experience for everyone (e.g. Andersson, 2012; Bloemraad, 2011; Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008; Finney & Simpson, 2009).

However, diversity goes far beyond "cultural diversity" and it is possible to draw out at least five main types of diversity (van der Veen & Wildemeersch, 2012). Firstly, the city has always been an arena of great differences in wealth between socio-economic classes. Since the industrialization in the West, the economic position of the majority of poor working-class people has greatly improved (moving the working class poor to the periphery of the world).

Secondly, age has also always been an important factor. Modernity in the West has brought a new attitude towards the generations: the young have obtained increased respect and more prominent roles (a prominent example is a symbol of current generation—Mark Zuckerberg). Thirdly, both social class and age group have always been important determinants for lifestyles. Fourthly, there are the gender differences. Thanks to successive feminist movements, the position of women has drastically changed, at least in the West. Finally, the city has always been a magnet for immigration of people from other regions and cultures, and both Oslo and Moscow are seeing this increase of immigrants from outside the Global West and North. It is against this typology that I consider later in the data discussion chapter how changes in diversity patterns impact NFL practices in the sample third spaces.

In 1996 UNESCO published the report on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors, 1996) where it is stressed that in a time of globalization renewed emphasis should be placed on "learning to live together" as a foundational value and skill. All other forms of learning, such as learning to know (about technology, economy), learning to act (as a worker or volunteer) and learning to be (an autonomous, responsible person) are basic pillars to support this most important one: learning to live together (Delors, 1996, 2013). Concurrently, at the policy level, the concept of social cohesion has become central in addressing the challenges of "living with diversity". It has been emphasized at all levels and has been translated into special policies such as creating socially balanced or mixed neighborhoods, identity-conscious urban designs, and so on (Vandenabeele, 2012).

Confrontation with otherness and strangeness is characterized by a fundamental ambivalence, feeling of unease, anguish and disorientation (e.g. Simmel, 1971). These experiences are socially situated and depend on the way strangeness is perceived in the community: as an acute threat to the national identity or a vital resource. On the other hand, contact with unfamiliar ways of life and expression can stimulate positive feeling of grasping, wonder and fascination (how it does, for example, when one goes travelling). It is this very excitement that is commonly related to the magic and vibe of cities (Vandenabeele, 2012).

Putnam (2007, p. 137) claims "that the most certain prediction that we can make about almost any modern society is that it will be more diverse a generation from now than it is today". He argues that in the long run immigration and diversity are likely to have important cultural, economic, fiscal, and developmental benefits. In the short run, however, immigration and

ethnic diversity tend to reduce generalized trust and social capital. He further predicts, that in the remote future successful mixed societies will have overcome fragmentation by creating new, cross-cutting forms of social solidarity and more encompassing identities.

Against this background, it is of interest to see how diversity and plurality in urban contexts transform educational practices in third spaces. I will begin by exploring these implications of a long-term transition to a more heterogeneous society through the concepts of social capital, community and networks.

2.2.5.1 Social capital

As the cliché has it, it is not what you know, but whom you know, that counts. This way the concept of social capital points to the ways in which social relationships serve as a resource, allowing individuals and groups to cooperate in order to achieve goals that otherwise might have been attained only with difficulty, if at all. In recent years, the concept provides a focus for a scholarly debate across a wide range of social studies disciplines. It has also entered the discourse of national governments and international agencies, the report *The Well-being of Nations: the role of human and social capital* (OECD, 2001) being one example.

Most definitions focus on membership in networks and the norms that guide their interactions. These, in turn, generate secondary features such as knowledge and trust, which then facilitate reciprocity and cooperation. However, this understanding further disguises a variety of interpretations. There are three main theoretical perspectives on social capital based on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. The latter is of particular interest for my theoretical framework.

There is an important distinction between definitions based on collective benefit and those of Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (e.g.1990) who define social capital as a resource used for the benefit of those individuals who have access to it. In this individual benefit tradition social capital is represented as a particular kind of means available to an actor. Putnam's definition (1995, 2007) takes a different perspective. He argues that social capital is capable of being used for both individual and collective benefit, and that the central challenge for modern and diversifying societies is to create a new, broader sense of "we".

Putnm (2007) sees two ways of looking at how communities "digest" diversity. On the one hand, "contact hypothesis" argues that diversity reinforces interethnic tolerance and social solidarity, meaning that as we have more contact with people who are unlike us we overcome our initial hesitation and ignorance and come to trust them more. In construct, so-called "conflict theory" suggests that, for various reasons—but above all, contention over limited resources – diversity fosters out-group distrust and in-group solidarity (Putnam, 2007). On this theory, the more we are brought into physical proximity with people of another race or ethnic background, the more we stick to "our own" and the less we trust the "other" (Putnam, 2007).

In order to explain *why* it is so, it is important to see a distinction between "bonding" social capital—ties to people who are like you in some important way, and "bridging" social capital—ties to people who are unlike you in some important way (Putnam, 2007). This way for myself—a twenty eight year old white-skinned girl—the bonding social capital in the university group consists of ties to female classmates of similar age and similar eastern European background, while my bridging social capital reflects connections to people of a different generation, race or gender. Durkheim's (1997) concepts of mechanic and organic solidarity are of a similar nature: in the first case, cohesion and integration come from the homogeneity of individuals based on resemblances, kinship of familial networks or religion and, in the second, interdependence emanates e.g. from the complementarities between people and a division of labor.

2.2.5.2   Community

Another central concept related to the challenges of diversity is community formation. First anthropologists used to investigate the simplest social communities with a hope to crack the codes of the universal patterns in social life. In this sense, early scholars searched for the common features rather than for distinctions. In the 20th century the paradigm changed and the duality of "simple/complex" was replaced by "own/other" (Wakhstein, 2011). "The other" in this sense generates, on the one hand, curiosity and attraction and, on the other,—resentment and even disgust.

In this regard, Simmel (1971) differentiates "a stranger" both from an "outsider" who has no specific relation to a group and from a "wanderer" who comes today and leaves tomorrow.

The stranger is a member of the group in which he/she lives and participates and, yet, remains distant from other—"native"—members of the group. In comparison to other forms of social distance and difference (such as class, gender, and even ethnicity) the distance of the stranger has to do with his/her origins. The stranger (or the other[10]) is perceived as extraneous or foreign to the group and even though he/she is in constant relation to other group members, this distance is more emphasized than his/her proximity. Thus, the stranger is perceived as being *in* the group but not *of* the group (Karakayali, 2009).

From another perspective, the role of a stranger also bears a certain objectivity that makes him/her a valuable member to the "native" society. This is because there is an assumption that the stranger is not associated with anyone significant and, therefore, is impartial. One somewhat debated but quite telling illustration that touches upon the histories of both Norway and Russia is a so-called Norman theory. It claims that the first state governors of the ancient Russian state were invited as expats from the Viking Scandinavia. It is argued that at the time it was a common practice to hire "an outsider party" (i.e. strangers) to serve as judges or, in the exemplary case, in order to unite several conflicting city states under one government (Franklin & Shephard, 1996; Liberman, 1983).

In the contexts of contemporary Moscow and Oslo Simmel's (1971) theory is applicable in the investigation of how diversity is perceived. An interesting observation in this connection is in the transposition of dimensions of Figure 2, i.e. transfer of interaction patterns from one group to another. A very common example here is a transfer from the enemy to the stranger. This phenomenon is behind a multitude of historical examples of deportations, repressions and ethnic cleansings (Wakhstein, 2011). Another transposition, innate to the times of the grand empires, is the reverse transfer: from the enemy to the stranger (the other), i.e. in seeing the current enemy as a potential stranger or "other".

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[10] I take a liberty to assume that the construct of stranger may be also referred to as "the other", and in the current context, even narrower—as a generalized "immigrant".
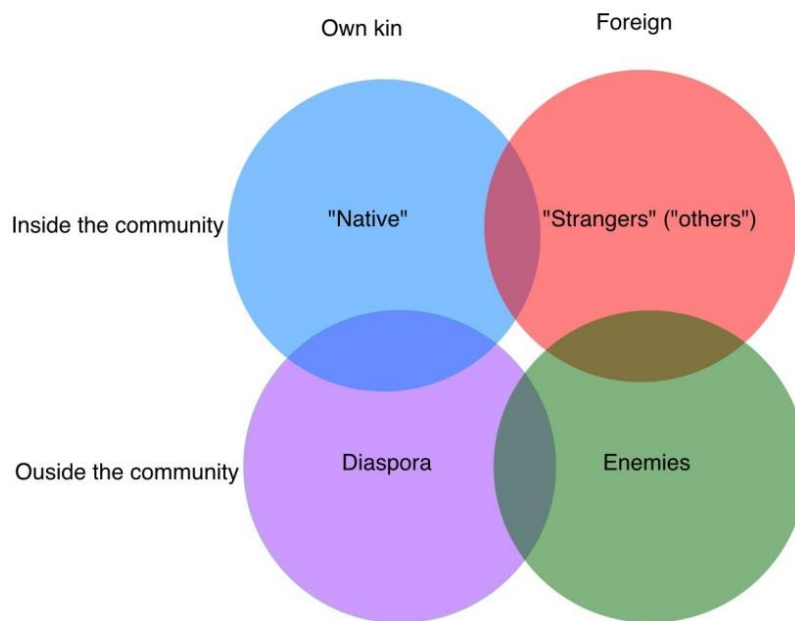
Figure 2. The convergence of "own/foreign" and "internal/external".

Note: Based on Wakhstein 's article (2011).

It is important to note here a certain ambiguity of perspectives. On the one hand, in the time of liquid modernity the diffusion across the dimensions is supposed to grow creating more hybrid and intermediate identities and likely whole social groups "in transition". But, on the other hand, as Pieterse (2009) argues, borders are not necessary smooth spaces and tensions may frequently occur and sharpen the edges. For the case of my study the nature of such tensions between "diaspora" and "native community" are of particular interest (see section 4.3).

This discussion raises the questions on what in this case can constitute the basis for a cohesive and peaceful community. The simplest foundation is communication (Wakhstein, 2011). In this study I relied on the three key elements of such communication as pointed by Wakhstein (2011), namely:

- communication patterns;
- communication architecture; and
- communication codes (What language is used? How does this language describe the reality?)

For instance, a recent case study conducted regarding a local community formation in Moscow (Wakhstein, 2011) showed that community bonds are very much dependent on temporary synchronization of lives. This synchronization implies an overlap of time rhythms, common past (e.g. they share compatible cultural codes), and similar ideas about the future. The research concludes with an inference that local communities and neighborhoods in Moscow are a very rare, close to a non-existent, phenomenon.

For the city as a whole, strong communities create a sense of trust and security as I extensively argue throughout this chapter. A lack of communities, thus, leads to a high level of insecurity in the urban environment (Wakhstein, 2011). Trust, and specifically generalized trust, is another principal foundation to the concept of community (Putnam, 1995, 2007). It refers to trust in other members of society and should be distinguished from particularized trust, which corresponds to trust in the family and a close circle of friends. An extensive empirical literature (e.g. Bjørnskov, 2007; Christ et al., 2014; Schmid, Ramiah, & Hewstone, 2014; Schmid et al., 2014) has established that generalized trust is an important aspect of civic culture in a multicultural city, and it has been further linked to a variety of positive outcomes at the individual level, such as entrepreneurship, volunteering, self-rated health, and happiness.

While to date, neighborhood studies on ethnic diversity in relation to generalized trust have revealed somewhat inconclusive findings, there is a strong agreement that in the context of substantial variation across countries, the results majorly support the view that generalized trust is a valuable social resource, for both the individual and for the wider multicultural society alike (e.g. Kalandides & Vaiou, 2012; Schmid et al., 2014).

> Contact not only changes attitudes for individuals experiencing direct positive intergroup contact, their attitudes are also influenced by the behavior (and norms) of fellow in-group members in their social context. Even individuals experiencing no direct, face-to-face intergroup contact can benefit from living in mixed settings where fellow in-group members do engage in such contact. (e.g. Christ et al., 2014, p. 3996)

A specific case is a learning community—the kind that universities and schools strive to form, and the kind desired in third spaces and within urban communities in general. The idea of a learning community assumes that certain types of social arrangements are more likely to

promote learning and social cohesiveness than others (e.g. Longworth, 1999). The construction of non-formal learning communities in multicultural settings is a central interest to my study which I discuss further (e.g. see section 4.5). One important attribute to such communities (and, certainly, to all communities in general) is a focus on such soft variables as social connections and values (e.g. Field, 2006). One such variable—networks—is discussed in the next section.

2.2.5.3   Networks

One of the central elements in the construction of a community is network-based interaction (Putnam, 1995, 2007), a result of increasing global horizontal interconnectedness echoed locally. Bauman (2005) also critically discusses networks in relation to liquid modernity.

> Society is increasingly viewed and treated as a network rather than structure: it is perceived and treated as a matrix of random connections and disconnections, and of essentially infinite volume of possible permutations (Bauman, 2005, p. 4).

Networks are diverse, inclusive, flexible, horizontal—linking those of similar status, and vertical—linking those of different status, particularly local organizations or individuals with external organizations and institutions. In a similar vein Baker (2012) highlights that the value of networks is in their diversity, autonomy, openness and interactivity. These attributes are also a common argument among the scholars and policy makers who advocate for "learning cities" as a foundation for a knowledge economy (Longworth, 1999; OECD, 2013b; SoongHee, 2011).

Putnam (1995) illustrates the power of networks with an example of such flat business clusters as Silicon Valley or Benetton. Those *"ultramodern industries are far from being paleoindustrial anachronisms, they are dense interpersonal and flat interorganizational networks"* (Putnam, 1995, p. 2).

Social capital comes in many forms, and not all networks have exactly the same impact: friendship bonds may improve health whereas civic groups strengthen democracy.

> Moreover, although networks can powerfully affect our ability to get things done, nothing guarantees that what gets done through networks will be socially beneficial. Al Qaeda, for instance, is an excellent example of social capital, enabling its

> participants to accomplish goals they could not accomplish without that network. Nevertheless, much evidence suggests that where levels of social capital are higher, children grow up healthier, safer and better educated; people live longer, happier lives, and democracy and the economy work better. (Putnam, 2007, p. 138)

In direct relation to the concept network a recent big data study in Moscow (MISCP, 2013) highlights the importance of "soft connections" (rather than economic status, class, ethnic backgrounds etc.) for the involvement of the population into the sociocultural life of the city. The report (MISCP, 2013) further point out the disappearance of the previously functioning system of cultural centers that aimed for social mixing and the reduction of social disintegration (see section 4.5.3.1 for one case story).

From a much wider angle, networks can be viewed as part of the theoretical framework of connectivism. At its heart, connectivism is the thesis that knowledge is distributed across a network of connections and, therefore, that learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse these networks (Baker, 2012; Downes, 2011; Siemens, 2005). Knowledge is therefore not acquired as though it were a thing, and not transmitted as though it were some type of communication. In very general terms, connectivism offers a similar perspective as Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development", an idea later transposed into Engeström's activity theory (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999).

In this respect Downes (2011) argues that what we learn and what we know—these are literally the connections we form between neurons as a result of our experience. "And while it is convenient to talk as though knowledge and beliefs are composed of sentences and concepts that we somehow acquire and store, it is more accurate—and pedagogically more useful—to treat learning as the formation of connections" (Downes, 2011, para. 7).

In the same vein Siemens (2005) argues that a learning community is essentially a clustering of similar areas of interest that allows for interaction, sharing, dialoguing, and thinking together. To learn medicine, in other words, you join a community of doctors, practice medicine, and thereby become a doctor. Downes (2011) warns that it is tempting to say that there are certain things that people learn when they become doctors, that there is some content that is essential to being a doctor. In this sense, a description of the content is, at best, an abstraction of the much more complex set of practices, attitudes and beliefs common among doctors. Because it is an abstraction, such a description cannot be accurate, and may mislead

people about what being a doctor actually entails. A person who merely knew the content supposedly taught and tested for at a medical academy would feel grossly out of place in a gathering of doctors. "It's like knowing the words but not knowing the tune" (Downes, 2011, para. 9).

In the connectivist model, a learning community is described as a node, which is always part of a larger network. Nodes arise out of the connection points that are found on a network. A network is comprised of two or more nodes linked in order to share resources. Nodes may be of varying size and strength, depending on the concentration of information and the number of entities navigating through a particular node (Downes, 2011; Siemens, 2005). This conception inspired me to visualize the network patterns (see section 4.5).

In my study I particularly look at the networks created by third spaces among each other and with other actors in society. In practical terms this implies that within the limits of my scope I sought to explore, on the one hand, network patterns typical to the third space in Oslo and Moscow (as identified by their properties, which Downes (2011) characterizes as diversity, autonomy, openness, and connectivity) and, on the other, examine the practices that contribute to creation of such networks.

2.3   Summary

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework with an overarching concept of liquid modernity at the center and some of its most relevant attributes, namely, post-industrial order, globalization and diversity. NFL and third space, the two key concepts of the study, are the throughline of the chapter. This way I have presented the theories and concepts that inform both the conduct of inquiry and the lenses which were used to interpret the themes emerging from the data. In the following chapter I discuss the way I approached my research questions, and the rationale for using particular methodological instruments.

3   Methods

This chapter presents an outline of methodological foundations for my study as well as a discussion about the instruments employed to explore 1) the values and meanings that providers of third spaces invest in NFL practices and 2) interaction patterns of these third spaces with and within the sociocultural landscape of the city.

The chapter begins with the underpinning philosophical stance and a rationale for choosing a qualitative approach. First, I discuss the methodological design and address the issues of research instruments, sites and sampling strategy. Further, questions of validity, ethics, and limitations of the study are considered. Lastly, I conclude with the data interpretation framework.

3.1   Research Design

The research design provides a general framework for the collection and analysis of data. The very foundation of it is the ontological and epistemological paradigms that form what is commonly referred to as a researcher's worldview primarily reflecting intrinsic beliefs about the world we live in and aspire to explore (Bryman, 2012). Epistemology relates to the questions of what knowledge is regarded as valid and whether "the social world can be studied in the same fashion as the natural" (Bryman, 2012, p. 27). Ontology, the other fundamental research lens, concerns the nature of social entities, with the central question being whether the reality is external and predetermined or socially constructed (Bryman, 2012).

In the case of my study, the epistemological assumption dwells upon the interpretivism that contrasts the orthodox positivism by assuming that reality is relative and multiple. Consequently, it argues that there exists more than a single way of exploring and viewing such realities, and social subjects are fundamentally different from those in the natural sciences (Bryman, 2012). For a researcher, such a position provides a greater scope to explore motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences which are time and context bound.

Accordingly, from the ontological perspective I find myself following the constructivist stance that asserts reality to be socially constructed through personal experiences, and knowledge production "to be indeterminate, fluid and to undergo constant recycling and negotiation" (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). Thereupon, constructionism claims that cultures are not pre-given and solid but a product of complex social interaction and are in a constant flow. (In this sense, my methodological position also reechoes the choice of theory). When applied to my study, I assume that sociocultural phenomena of NFL practices in third spaces emerge from and further operate, to a large extent, through the ways in which the actors in a setting— experts and activists in the field—construct meanings and values about them (Bryman, 2012, p. 28-30). The research method, which is essentially a strategy of enquiry, stems from these prime philosophical assumptions.

NFL and third space are broad concepts and can be approached through examining and comparing global, national and local policy or media, through observation of practice, experimentation, literature review, statistics, and so on. There is, certainly, a great variety of both qualitative and quantitative instruments. In my study, I attempt to explore these social phenomena through the examination and mapping of its interpretations formulated by the actors (i.e. providers, meaning-makers and agenda-setters), traced in the media and observed phenomenologically. Through the eyes of these actors I intend to uncover the reasons that govern the development of third spaces and their role in the liquid society (Bauman, 2013)— the "why" and "how" of it,—going beyond "what", "where", and "when". Such a goal implies an inductive mode of inquiry with an emphasis on "words rather than quantification", and where theory is to be generated from or reflected upon the data rather than tested (Bryman, 2012, p. 367). This is also the reason for choosing smaller but focused and manageable samples—two cities, nine informants and approximately twenty third spaces in total for observation. On this note, I will briefly retrace the rationale for the choice of locations partly discussed in the introduction chapter.

This study is a multi-sited ethnography whose object is "not the place itself, but a particular cultural phenomenon" existent in several locations with a focus on people involved, their perspectives and experiences (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011, p.166-167). In my case, however, I attempt to look at the phenomenon *through* the eyes of informants rather than to center attention on the informants themselves. It is worth to note, that I use the term

"ethnography" in its contemporary interpretation that, as Patton puts it (2002), allows the researcher to study their own environment by going beyond a classical ethnographic trigger— "fascination with the exotic otherness". Holding such an emic, insider position and studying own cultural surrounding entails certain limitations that I bring up later in section 3.8.

It is also important to highlight that while the sample cities are two diverse sociocultural landscapes, my research places focus on the exploration of a shared phenomenon, which makes a comparative perspective supplementary, applied to shade cultural nuances and add some contextual volume to otherwise a common social experience. In other words, it's not a magnitude of the comparison, but an attempt of a comprehensive investigation of "how and why" behind the construction and development of the open NFL culture in third spaces.

3.2   Research Instruments

As earlier mentioned, my study is qualitative and ethnographic which naturally suggests particular types of methodological instruments, among which the most common are interviews and observations (Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2002). The attractiveness of the first is in its flexibility and opportunity to go deeper in the investigation of subjective matters. The advantage of observations is in the provision of "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973, pp. 5–6)— detailed data on the sampled environments acquired through the senses of a researcher: eyes, ears, touch and guts feeling. Documentary analysis in the study is auxiliary in relation to the other two methods and is employed to provide richer background knowledge of the topic and sample population. The three data collection tools are described below in more detail.

3.2.1   Interview

There is a good reason interviews are often used as the primary source for qualitative data in research. Social abstractions (such as a third space) have multiple possible interpretations in the social world and appear to be best explored through the experiences of individuals whose work and lives are "the stuff upon which the abstractions are built" (Seidman, 2012, p. 9). Interviews tell such stories allowing for deeper insight into the values, views and meanings. At the very heart of it, as Seidman puts it, is "the ability to symbolize experience and train of thought through the language" (Seidman, 2012, p. 8). This way, having chosen interview as the principal tool of data collection I intended to benefit from the process that allows my

respondents to select constitutive details of expertise, reflect upon them, give them order, and lift them to generalizations and theories—and, thereby, make better sense of them (Seidman, 2012).

Hour-long semi-structured interviews were conducted with six informants in Moscow and three in Oslo. The rationale for the choice of semi-structured guide is, in one respect, in its flexibility "to ramble" on certain topics giving attention to nuances and, in the other, an opportunity to code, compare and correlate the findings afterwards (Bryman, 2012).

All the interviews were carried out face to face, taped and some further member checked via email to avoid inaccuracy in translation from Russian into English. The Norwegian language was used once at the conference (see later in this section), and partly in the work with the media outputs. The interviews in Moscow were conducted in Russian, given that it is my mother tongue, and then partially translated into English, while the ones in Oslo were all held originally in English. The interview guide (see Appendices 1 and 2) consisted of approximately eight inquiry units (e.g. questions regarding the concepts of NFL in third spaces, thier role in the city, aspects of localization and the future vision). These questions followed a natural conversational flow moving from the subjects closer related to respondent's work experience (e.g. "How do the NFL practices you run differ from formal educational activities?"), and then proceeding into more abstract matters (e.g. "How do you see the future and social meaning of third spaces in 5-10 years?").

The first interview was a pilot study, and I ran it with an informant obtained through personal connections. This way, I had the opportunity to test the time needed to cover the questions, wordings, sequence, clarity and capacity for thought provocation in the informal setting and with an instant feedback. Some adjustments were made consequently, one example being a need to crystalize and define the terms which alter their meaning when translated directly e.g. "non-formal/formal/informal learning" or "lifelong learning".

In addition to interviews, I attended a conference called "Hvorfor trenger vi Litteraturhuset" ("Why do we need the House of Literature?"), where I was able to participate and record a debate on the role of the House of Literature in the Norwegian society[11]. I am placing this

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[11] Litteraturhuset is a principal research site in Oslo due to its elaborate ambition to be a city-wide arena for public debate.

source under the "interview" section and not under "observation" since the panel discussion I attended, to a large degree, reflected my original interview guide, specifically in regard to questions on the role of third spaces in the city. Accordingly, my interest was in the very content of the conversation and not in the participants, their interactions or a general atmosphere. While I was not the one posing questions, I suggest that this method may be roughly considered as "a collective interview with some elements of focus group discussion".

It is also important to highlight that there were significant time lapses between the interviews which allowed me to gradually adjust the original guide. For instance, I shifted my initial focus from a vague (as I discovered after a couple of interviews) concept of "lifelong learning" to a more substantive "non-formal learning in third spaces", as well as expanded the questions touching upon the future vision and social challenges that third spaces aspire to address. At one point, certain data saturation was reached as I was getting similar answers (Patton, 2002), which in the last interviews allowed to focus more on the local sociocultural factors influencing the development of third spaces.

3.2.2   Observation

While interviews may cover the inquiry into "why" and "how" third spaces operate in the city from the providers' perspective, it seemed beneficial to additionally observe the actual learning practices and environments (e.g. Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2002). The aim was to better familiarize and immerse myself in the field over an extended period of time and experience NFL practices first-hand. I carried out simple semi-structured covert observations (see Appendix 3) granted that attending events as a common participant was an easy and enjoyable task. Since I attended open public events, my observations did not necessarily include ethical concerns that are sometimes problematic for covert data collection.

I specifically looked at the local learning environments and the audience profiles in order to further draw upon the field notes during the interviews and collect some case stories to further illustrate the findings. With these two goals in mind, I observed in total twenty learning events such as lectures, talks and public debates in Moscow and Oslo. It is worth noting that due to the well-developed digital culture around open NFL practices many e-sources such as video, photographs and reviews were available as supplementary secondary data. The next section continues with more detail on how written resources were used in the study.

3.2.3   Documentary analysis

Documentary research is the use of outside sources: documents of all sorts ranging from official papers to video tapes either in electronic or hard copy form (Bryman, 2012). No such text is neutral and is always bound by its distinctive purposes and implied readership. Thus, in line with Atkinson and Coffey's concept of "documentary reality" (Atkinson & Coffey, 2010) I viewed my data as not *reflecting*, but rather *enriching* the reality supplying it with an extra dimension. Examples of texts used in my study include publications produced by my informants, media outputs on the themes related to NFL in third spaces, official papers of museums and libraries, (e.g. Oslo Museum Årsmelding 2012, Norsk Teknisk Museum Årsrapport 2012, ZIL Strategy 2013 and Strelka Institute Vision 2020) and survey data from the *Norwegian Cultural Barometer* (Statistics Norway, 2013) and *Monitoring of Cultural Practices in Moscow* (MISCP, 2013) reports. While the two latter documents are not entirely equivalent and, thus, do not allow for a structured comparison, they, nevertheless, provide information-rich background dossiers in relation to the patterns of sociocultural practices in Oslo and Moscow.

The primary rationale to use media outputs and official documents was to immerse myself in the context (specifically in the Norwegian setting for it is not my native) in order to get a better understanding of the sociocultural landscapes. Secondly, given that all the informants are public figures I went through the media in order to customize the interviews by adding context-specific questions. In addition, I reviewed the media to pick up on the ongoing discourse in the field and to monitor for the currently circulating themes. This type of analysis concurs with what Gee (2007) refers to as "little d" and "big D" discourses. The first one is defined as:

> (…) connected stretches of language that make sense like conversations, stories, reports, arguments, essays; "discourse" is a part of big "Discourse". "Discourse" with a big "D" is always more than just a language, but (…) ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, and body positions. (Gee, 2007, p. 142)

Hence, the all-encompassing big "D" discourse is something that gradually emerges from all levels of data and, in my case, through interviews, media and observations. The small "d"

discourse is, then, essentially a corporate language used in the professional circles by the providers of NFL in third spaces.

The next section makes an account for the sites and samplings of the study.

3.3   Research Sites

I picked Oslo and Moscow as two sociocultural settings of developed NFL environments. On a macro level, both cities are progressively multicultural with all the tensions and benefits that diversity generates for the society and education as one of its core elements. The cities belong epistemologically to the global North and West; both politically prioritize education as a public good, and both are involved in the global debate on education in the post-industrial era, its implication for the society and its increasingly neoliberal imperative. As I elaborate earlier in the introduction chapter there are, certainly, many cultural, social and political distinctions between the two settings which allow for a marginal comparative outlook (see section 4.1.1).

Despite great differences Oslo and Moscow share certain common features in the field of NFL. Both cities have extensive networks of the state-supported third spaces such as libraries, museums and cultural centers as well as a great scope of entrepreneur projects some of which are replanted global practices (e.g. Coursera Hub, PechaKucha and Science Slams). What is particularly interesting for my study is how some of these third spaces have obtained a strong agency beyond the domain of NFL and edutainment. In doing so, they seem to play a wider role as independent urban forums that shape public opinions and generate knowledge production, this way, extending their intellectual and social influence on the city as a whole.

3.4   Sampling

Taking into consideration the qualitative nature of the study and its prime focus on the in-depth investigation of meanings and values, purposeful sampling of informants and spaces was applied. Such sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting people, cases, events, pieces of data etc., and implies that the subject of study is central to participants' experience (Patton, 2002). Unlike various probability sampling techniques, the goal of purposive sampling is not to randomly select units with the intention to

make further generalizations or statistical inferences, but to focus on particular characteristics of a phenomenon or a population of interest (Bryman, 2012).

Therefore, within the Patton's typology I chose criterion sampling that "involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). It was deemed appropriate given a relatively limited scope of potential informants in the particular field of NFL (see section 2.1.3) as well as clear criteria to consider: comprehensive experience and a high level of expertise in creating and managing third spaces. These criteria can be seen as somewhat relative, and to ensure the quality of sampling I applied two basic methods: sought extensively for recommendations and, then, after each conducted interview asked for a further reference to people and places that might be of potential interest to my study.

To summarize the above, the intention to apply purposeful sampling was in making use of "information rich cases whose study illuminates the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Such cases were selected upon the prior analysis of their "citation index" in the media, my personal knowledge and consultations with informed personal contacts. As a result, twenty venues and nine informants were selected (given the population difference there are more informants and places from the context of Moscow). Below are short descriptions of the key study samples.

3.4.1.1 Sampling profiles in Moscow

Site 1: **Russian State Library for Young Adults**. A pilot project in a new wave of libraries, that is a multi-purpose local center rather than a book repository. Its aim is to create a NFL environment in the neighborhood and serve as a community-run lecture hall, rgub.ru;

Informant A: Anton Purnik, development director.

Site 2: **ZIL**, **Culture Centre**. A recently rebranded state-funded cultural center with a broad range of NFL programs, zilcc.ru;

Informant B: Elena Melvil, general director.

Site 3: **Strelka** is a private non-profit research institute aimed at generating new knowledge about public life of cities. As a part of its daily operation, it hosts free open lectures, debates and documentary film screenings, strelka.com;

Informant C: Ekaterina Girshina, programming director.

Site 4: **Polytechnic Museum Lecture Hall** holds learning events ranging from traditional lectures to science slams in local pubs, pmlectures.ru,

Informant D: Ivan Boganzev, director of educational programs.

Site 5: **Higher School of Economics (HSE)** is a private university with an extensive public program in museums and parks, hse.ru;

Informant E: Valeria Kosamara, public program director, vice rector.

Site 6: **Digital October** is a third place for IT entrepreneurship community which hosts open learning events for a wider public. Its flagman projects are PechaKucha and Coursera Learning Hub, knowledgestream.ru;

Informant F: Julia Lesnikova, director of educational programs.

Site 7: **Polit.ru** is the oldest independent public lecture hall that runs events around the issues of politics and public life (observations only).

Site 8: **Gender School**. A small-scale activist initiative aiming to generate a public debate on feminism and gender in the post-soviet cultures. NFL practices are held in summer in the atriums of public parks. gendermoscow.com/school (observations only);

Informant G: Elena Zelenzova[12], first deputy to the head of department of culture in Moscow, www.kultura.mos.ru/about/staff/, (data is based on her interviews and articles in the media).

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[12] Elena Zelenzova is not related to any of the third spaces in particular (although she used to be the head of ZIL Cultural Center for a year). However, nowadays she works as the deputy head with the scope of her duty being about restructuring and revitalization of the state-funded network of libraries and cultural centers (a system inherited from the soviet times and which has been in deep stagnation in the last decade).

Site 9: **Litteraturhuset** communicates and promotes interest in literature and reading and freedom of speech. One of the objectives is to foster a debate and to serve as an arena for the voices from both the Norwegian and international cultural domain. It is a place for NFL events arranged by a range of different organizations, discussing a variety of topics ranging from international politics and climate change to storytelling. www.litteraturhuset.no

Informant H: Silje Riise Næss, programming director.

Informant I: a regular attendee[13]: a Norwegian-born lady in her late 40s and with higher education (parameters that fit well into the most common participant profile in Oslo, see section 4.4).

Site 10: **OsloByMuseet** consists of two divisions: Intercultural Museum and Oslo City Museum. It runs a variety of NFL practices and also positions itself as an urban meeting space, www.oslomuseum.no

Informant J: Linken Apall-Olsen, head of department

Site 11: **Deichmanske bibliotek** is a network of public libraries that runs daily learning events for diverse social groups around literature and beyond. www.deichman.no, (observations only).

Site 12: **Technical Museum** is a science museum with an extensive public lecture program. www.tekniskmuseum.no, (observations only).

3.5 Validity Considerations

As it is common for most qualitative researchers I am more concerned with the validity of the study—a degree to which data and interpretation fit the case—than generalizability, replicability or reliability critical for quantitative studies (Patton, 2002). Following the ideas of Lincoln and Guba I have also considered the four criteria of trustworthiness (as referred in Bryman, 2012, p. 390). However, as the primary quality assurance framework I chose the one

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[13] The rationale behind additionally interviewing one regular attendee at a later stage of the data analysis was to nuance the account for the Litteraturhuset case.

suggested by Maxwell (2009, pp. 214–253). Following his approach, I took a number of steps that are presented in detail below.

Firstly, the review of the media outputs and observations provided me with an intensive long-term immersion in the field. Secondly, the informants are well-established experts in the field which ensured rich data material. Thirdly, at the mid-stage of data analysis I selectively conducted respondent validation which is essentially a method of soliciting feedback about data and conclusions from the interviewees (also referred to as "member checks" by Patton (2002). It allows participants to critically reflect upon their ideas and volunteer additional information stimulated by a "playing back" process. This is also a method of reducing misinterpretations as well as an important way of identifying own biases (Maxwell, 2009). Finally, some elements of methodological triangulation were applied such as comparing collected data from the interviews with the media outputs, observation notes (e.g. on learning environments) and official papers (on questions about goals and vision). Such an intermix of instruments works for a better verification and is important to strengthen the findings (Patton, 2002). For example, I tried to trace how the providers' perception of what happens in actual NFL settings correlates with my own observations.

Not the least, triangulation helps in playing down certain challenges of reflexivity (Bryman, 2012) i.e. the influence researcher's own values and biases impose upon the study caused by, for instance, power imbalance with the informants (Yin, 2011). The latter aspect is discussed further in section 3.8.

Lastly, an important tool of ensuring a clearer outlook at the data was peer review which helped in distilling the findings, checking for clarity and avoiding cultural biases. The latter objective—to have my work looked at through different cultural glasses—was of particular help. Even though the concept of third space is valid for all cultures, I conduct the study within a western context and being a "westerner" myself which, certainly, limits my perception. In this case, an occasional but methodological second opinion from peers of a different background than mine was invaluable. Amon other things it helped me to see the concepts in need of elaboration and possible developments of my theme outside my context.

3.6   Positionality

One important challenge to me as a researcher was an objective to sample two cities of different cultures, in one of which I find myself in the position of an insider or local and, in the other, to a large degree, as an outsider. Even though both urban environments of Oslo and Moscow belong to the Global North, an important imbalance lies within my own personal history and relations with each of the places. Such critical concern in the context of multiple axes of politics, histories and cultures is referred to as "positionality" of a researcher and implies that the conduct of fieldwork is always contextual, relational, embodied, and politicized (Farhana, 2007; Merriam et al., 2001; Rose, 1997). Reflecting upon researcher's positionality is the practice of delineating my own positions in relation to the study with the implication that this position may influence certain aspects of the study such as the nature of the collected data or the way in which it is interpreted and presented (Merriam et al., 2001).

There is a number of hindering factors which may cause bias in my case. It is my lack of cultural background, language fluency in Norwegian and social networks in Oslo; and the presence of the above, respectively, in the context of Moscow. Furthermore, it is my personal belief in the power of NFL practices in third spaces and their positive impact on the city that permeates the questions I pose and the way I look at my data. While these concerns are inevitable for all sorts of research, regardless whether it is conducted within native or a foreign culture, it is critical to reflect upon personal premises throughout all the stages of study. In the case of my thesis, this implied, for example, recurrent informal advisory from locals in Oslo and ongoing feedback from the peers of diverse cultural backgrounds.

3.7   Ethics

The nature of this study does not imply delicate discussions and all interviewees granted disclosure of their job titles and names, some—under the condition of member checking. Nevertheless, no matter how neutral the research questions look, the code of ethics is applied to any study. It concerns what Yin (2011, p. 39) refers to as "research integrity" and entails among other possible issues fairness in examination and inclusion of data regardless of how supportive it is to researcher's argument, informed consent and member checking, disclosure of the conditions that might have influenced the conduct of study and issues of reflexivity.

3.8   Limitations

One of the limitations to my study is found in the status of its informants all of whom are pre-occupied public figures. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 147) warn against possible hazards in interviewing "intellectual elites" caused by power asymmetry or falling into what they call "beaten talk tracks" (when respondents are not focused and tend to swing the conversation to comfortable grounds relying on "pre-cooked" answers). In the case of my study, I did not experience the pressure of power imbalance as such, however, a few of the participants felt unwilling to go beyond the conversation about their own work or try to look critically at their practice. This led me to go over certain questions repeatedly and involved some maneuvering on my part.

In an important sense, the multilingual nature for the study was a limitation as well. Certain deflection in translation and understanding was vital to consider given that interviews in Moscow were conducted in Russian and in English in Oslo. Nevertheless, while I originally anticipated more ambiguity in negotiating the terms during the interviews it appeared to be a lesser challenge in reality. Although some of the abstract concepts like "learning" and "education" may carry different etymology and connotations, in general, the terms coined by the informants and me were a part of more global NFL discourse and did not require an elaboration (e.g. the concept of edutainment). In addition, as I mention before, some of the findings were verified in English by member check emails. This way, potential errors related to translation were avoided.

Lastly, I have to be aware that my interpretation of the Norwegian context is limited by my lack of cultural background and language. This may impact the way I perceive and elaborate on the data. This bias is a common limitation in a multi-sited ethnography conducted in the native and foreign cultures. One way that I used to reduce such an asymmetry was peer feedback (see section 3.5).

3.9   Data Interpretation Framework

The data analysis in my study is ethnographic in its nature due to the emphasis on allowing categories to develop out of the data. The process consisted of, firstly, examining the interviews, media resources, official papers and observation notes, followed by coding,

condensation, thematic grouping and clustering of data. At a further stage, I mapped the processed findings and let the connections to theory emerge. Figure 3 shows these stages of data analysis in order of application.

3.9.1   Grounded theory

Although preliminary to the field trip I had read through some literature and elicited relevant concepts such as third space and NFL, the final theoretical framework loomed gradually through the process of mapping and analysis of the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) refer to such strategy as "grounded theory" and emphasize its iterative nature, meaning that data collection, analysis and theory generation "proceed in tandem, referring back to each other". Given a considerable

| Transcription |
| Selective transcibtion, preliminary data condensation |

| Coding |
| Key words, assigning tags |

| Condensation |
| Reductions of repetitions and overwording |

| Thematic grouping |
| Clustering through use of color, cut-outs, marking overlaps |

| Mapping |
| Correlating ideas: major vs. supporting; conceptual vs. illustrative; cross-cutting; binary, overlapping; contradictory; interrelated ideas; "two side of one coin" etc. |

| Connections to theory |
| Extracting and developing emerging links to the theory |

| Deducations, reflections, analysis |
| Making notes for emerging interpretations/analysis/concepts |

Figure 3. Data processing strategy

ambiguity of the term, I subscribe to a narrower understanding of ground theory which Bryman (2012, p. 378) defines as a way of "looking systematically at qualitative data after its collection" aiming at engineering the theory out of it. However, Bryman (2012) stresses that much of what is generated constitute concepts rather than theory, which, I admit, is a valid critique to my study as well.

3.9.2   Social cartography

Social cartography (or mapping) is an interpretive tool for visualizing and analyzing data. In the work on social cartography Paulston (1997) explicitly advocates for the use of maps that problematize and develop a visual dialogue. The rationale for converting qualitative data into a visual representation at the stage of analysis (rather than just as a presentation tool) is twofold. First, annotated maps compress information and make it manageable to shuffle and ponder, helping to see it in new ways. Such structuring of ideas and concepts resembles the way our brain works—via links, networks or association and mirrors a naturally non-linear
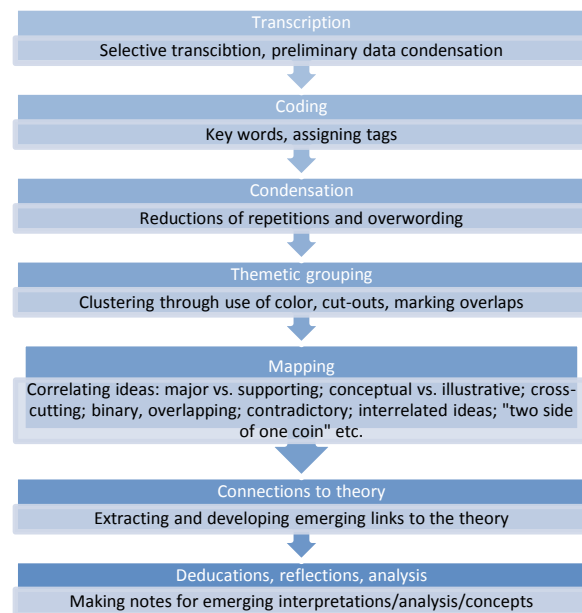
thinking process by zooming in and out, measuring and manipulating data (Paulston, 1997; De Visscher, Bouverne-De Bie, & Verschelden, 2012). The second reason behind drawing maps is intuitive is the very idea of a city that calls for the use of a map as the most organic of its representations. Appendix 4 shows one example of the maps that I drew to make sense of the data and theory.

3.9.3   Comparative analysis

As mentioned elsewhere comparative perspective provides a supplementary angle and serves mainly to address the question of how the idea of third space gets glocalized in Oslo and Moscow. To put it otherwise, what differences in the patterns can be observed: in actor networks, in learning cultures, future visions, themes and forms of NFL practices and, importantly, what are the implications behind these differences and similarities.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has sketched out the research approach, design and methodology adopted in the study and included procedures, participants, data collection tools, analysis framework, validity and ethics considerations, and limitations. The genre of my study is a multi-sited ethnography that is conducted with the use of qualitative methods, namely, semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and the analysis of media and documents. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings.

4   Data Presentation and Discussion

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of NFL conducted in third spaces in the sociocultural landscapes of Oslo and Moscow. I base my discussion on the data collected from the qualitative interviews, observations and media review, which are interpreted through the theoretical lenses presented earlier in Chapter 2. Additionally, I make use of some supplementary data from the reports published in Russia and Norway by SSB[14], FOM[15], and MISCP[16].

It is important to note that since I appeal to various types of written material such as minutes from public debates, YouTube recordings, blog posts, statistics, local studies, etc. I took the liberty to extensively use the footnotes in order to clarify the sources I make references to. This way, I slightly depart from the APA regulations and for the sake of reader's convenience reference the media data the following way: authors' name (where applicable) and date are placed in-text and, additionally, the source is indicated in the footnote.

As I mentioned elsewhere, at the early stage of data analysis it was brought to my attention that the implicit throughline in the findings was that the phenomenon of NFL in third spaces seems to be well embedded into what Bauman (2013) refers to as liquid modernity. This exact wording was neither brought into the conversations by me, nor was it formulated as such by the informants. However, it seems to be applicable as an umbrella theory consolidating the findings and framing the discussion. This way, Bauman's ideas of liquidity weave in and out throughout the chapter constituting its core theoretical underpinning.

The chapter is divided into eight themes, each discussing one aspect of NFL in third spaces. The analysis follows a mind-map design where the phenomenon NFL practices in third space are placed in the center and eight themes, while being mutually-interconnected, adhere back to and support the main thesis rather than linearly grow one into another.

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[14] Statistisk sentralbyrå I Norge

[15] Public Opinion Fund (Moscow)

[16] Moscow Institute for Socio-Cultural Programs and Research

Namely,

> In section 4.1, I compare how the notion NFL in third spaces is conceptualized by the informants and how it is adopted to suit the local needs;

> In section 4.2, I investigate why institutional, hierarchical, subject-related, and other borders dissolve, and how it impacts NFL in third spaces. I particularly focus on network patterns among third spaces as well as with other actors in the city;

> In section 4.3, I discuss how third spaces and NFL practices can contribute to building more cohesive communities, and develop a sense of belonging and ownership;

> In section 4.4, I focus on how diversity is perceived and experienced in NFL practices specifically, and in the city at large;

> In section 4.5, I further elaborate on the community construction as it was seen by the informants. A particular focus is placed on the formation of multicultural NFL communities;

> In section 4.6, I discuss the phenomenon of NFL practices in third spaces as a private or public good, and the implications behind these two understandings;

> In section 4.7, I explore the implicit market-oriented underpinnings in NFL and their implications for the society;

> In section 4.8, the questions of how and why massification and entertainment permeate and transform NFL in third spaces are brought up. I further discuss the changes to the sociocultural landscape that these processes inflict;

> Lastly, section 4.9 summarizes the results.

I start my discussion by elaborating on the concept of third space as perceived and debated by the informants. I will afterwards argue how the ideas elicited from the data adhere to the all-encompassing framework of liquid modernity.

4.1   Contextualization of NFL Practices in Third Spaces

While at the data collection stage I was not yet relating my research to Bauman's ideas (e.g. Bauman, 2005, 2013), it now seems that I was often rambling around them. For instance, the idea of education that goes beyond formal institutions was originally suggested by one of my first informants (the exact proposed wording was "post-institutional design [architecture] of education"):

> I believe that education in the future will not follow traditional institutional hierarchies and become flatter, more networked and interconnected. (Interview, Moscow, November 2013)

Captured by this speculation, I tried to bring up the notion of "post-institutionality" further in the course of data collection elaborating on it as synonymous to post-hierarchal organization of educational practices. Ultimately, it appeared to be a shared leitmotif in the interviews to go beyond conventional institutional frameworks and develop flatter, more versatile and networked educational spaces that have a potential to benefit the cohesiveness of the urban landscape. Bauman's theory seems to have puzzled bits and pieces of the data together into a whole picture where third spaces and NFL practices shape and are being shaped by the complexity and dynamics of the "liquid" sociocultural landscape. On this note, I will narrow the conversation down and discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of NFL practices in third spaces as seen from the perspective of my informants.

As often stressed during the interviews, a great advantage of NFL, particularly in its "enlightening" and open dimension (see section 2.1.3) is that it is not a subject for assessment in the form of failure-oriented exams, tests and ratings which makes a great difference when compared to learning within the formal setting of a school or university[17]. Below is an example of a recurrent remark on the advantage of learning outside academia:

> We are neither subjected to tests nor to any other top-down control regarding which knowledge is to be prioritized and how it is to be shared. We are incomparably more flexible than schools and universities in this sense. (Member check follow-up email, Moscow, February 2013)

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[17] It is so if we consider continuous professional development courses, which are, however, out of the focus in my study.

The perspective of a regular attendee was congruent:

> When I was doing my bachelor, I used to attend events organized, for example, by UNICEF or UN at Litteraturhuset. It was more relaxing there. You come there voluntarily, there's no test at the end and, consequently, no pressure. (Interview with a Litteraturhuset attendee, Oslo, March 2014)

However, it appears that the very argument favoring the lack of formal assessment may be simultaneously seen as a disadvantage. NFL practices in third spaces are loosely organized, fragmented and, based on my observations quite commonly teacher-centered. In an important sense, it counters Jarvis'(2013) definition of learning that claims that in order to be transformative learning requires effort, digestion and ownership which, consequently, implies participatory involvement beyond occasional evening entertainment (see section 2.1.1).

Likewise, while the idea of not being bound by formal assessment brings about certain freedom and autonomy, it may also imply vague credibility and accountability for quality. In this sense, being spared from this burden does not necessarily lead to independence as the choice of content and formats may, thereby, become a commodification to the tastes of the general public which, as the saying goes, desires *panem et circenses*. I come back to the convergence of education and entertainment later in this chapter (see section 4.7).

As I argue previously in the theoretical chapter, the concept of third space is universal and valid for both traditional and modern societies and, practically, across all human cultures. Yet, in practice third spaces may look unrecognizably different as well as NFL that happens there is also not at all uniform. Put in other words, the phenomenon of NFL in third spaces is familiar to all cultures, but *how* people learn and build learning communities is to a large degree culturally soft-wired (see section 2.1.1). This argument can be illustrated by the following story.

> We are geographically and, as many would argue, culturally in between the West and the East. This is a mental midpoint that may both work as a disadvantage—lack of solid cultural references and to our advantage—we can make use of this flexibility and blend the strategies of the East and the West. A while ago we went to learn from the experiences of most famous libraries around the world. While we often saw very similar architectural design, the way these spaces were filled with energy and activity differed significantly. For example, a public library in Shanghai looked like an almost replica of one in Stockholm, but the inner environment felt

nothing like there. It felt rigid and disciplined, with lots of "don't do this and that" written everywhere on the walls. In our own library we wanted to see the opposite—a more relaxed and flatter environment. As a first step and more of an experiment, we replaced some of the chairs with pouffes [shapeless tuffets]. We scattered them in the reading rooms but they remained untouched for a long while. It took, to our surprise, more than a month for our regular visitors to lay back in them to read a book without, what we assume, a historically-wired fear to be told off by the librarian. (Interview, Moscow, September 2013)

Monthly cultural agendas in Oslo and Moscow are another example of notable and, simultaneously, quite expectable culture-based difference. If we take a look at the learning practices and events in one sample month in both Oslo and Moscow, a clear difference in the choice of themes regarding domestic and international politics will come to attention. Based on my observations and interviews, political debate appears to be a very common activity in Oslo and a very rare one in Moscow.

Figure 4. Technology and democracy. Exhibition at Teknisk Museum in Oslo

Even the very word "debate" itself is much more frequently used the public discourse of Oslo (see e.g. Figure 4), while it is almost absent in the cultural listings of Moscow. This observation was supported by the informants.

> In Scandinavia there is a tradition of public arenas for debate that are designed to create the feeling of togetherness. In the case of Norway it is at the foundation of our democracy, civil society and worldview. (Interview, Oslo, November 2013)

Or in the same spirit:

> We feel that we should be a very open and inclusive place and try to raise difficult questions and reflect upon both history as well as the current sociopolitical and cultural agenda. (Interview, Oslo, December 2013)

Similarly, at the conference on the role of Litteraturhuset in Oslo some speakers noted that since "democracy is an argument, not a tea party" such places as Litteraturhuset should serve as public arenas for debate and moderated confrontation seeing literature is a *medium* for communication rather than just a *content* (seminar "Hvorfor trenger vi Litteraturhuset", Oslo, November 2013).

This way, it can be argued that third spaces in Oslo play an important role of reinforcing democracy and participatory citizenship through debate and other NFL practices, while in Moscow third spaces tend to be mainly concerned with science and the sort of humanities that are carefully formulated and "politics-free" as self-censorship and political pressures critically limit the scope of themes. Among other things, it may reflect (and simultaneously foster) the separation of public and political domains which, consequently, can draw the general public away from the politics.

In the section that follows I discuss some of the prime attributes of NFL in third spaces suggested by my informants and further developed through observations and media review.

4.2   Eductaion Sans Frontières

In the world looked at through the lenses of liquid modernity framework borders are a rather relative concept. In formal education borders are, contrariwise, everywhere: between the levels of secondary and higher education, formal and informal learning, private and state provision and so on (including the physical and imaginary borders delineating the timing of lessons, age division in classes etc.). Borders also appear within the body of knowledge itself in the partition of disciplines that constitutes not just a map, but more of a hierarchy where some knowledges are given more validity than others (see section 2.1.1).

When asked about their understanding of the role and value of NFL, many of my informants in their own words referred to the phenomenon of liquidity.

> Unlike in the traditional idea of a national museum or theatre, we do not rely that much on embedded cultural codes and frameworks and, therefore, operate in a flatter and more flexible way. (Interview, Oslo, November 2013)

Moreover,

> [in many museums] there is an evident shift from the position of observation and conservation to a stronger and wider active stance. (Interview, Oslo, December 2013)

These remarks exemplify how the informants from the museums in both Oslo and Moscow elaborated, on the one hand, on the idea of not just cross-disciplinarity, but rather—anti-disciplinarity and, on the other, on the wider and more stirring position towards the city.

In a similar way, for the informants in libraries the most reoccurring theme was liquidity in terms of objectives and forms of use: a library as a local reading club, as a co-working space, a lecture hall, NFL center, and so on. This rounds up to the discourse of "møteplass" (meeting place) or "hub" in Moscow, which is essentially synonymous to a third space. In the particular case of Oslo ByMuseet, "møteplass discourse" was not only a part of the insider vernacular, but also a state-funded strategy that implies "sociocultural and educative efforts targeted [among other things] to the integration of immigrants and work with senior citizens" (interview, Oslo, December 2013). A similar idea of "a hub" is cross-cutting for such sample third spaces as ZIL cultural center, Strelka or Litteraturhuset. A hub in this sense was seen as a *meeting* and *melting* space in a wider understanding—for natural science and humanities as well as for people from diverse backgrounds.

It would appear that such simultaneous development across several dimensions (e.g. cultural, social, or environmental) requires partnerships and inter-field connections based on flat networks rather than hierarchal structures.

4.2.1   *Networks*

Most of the informants pointed out networks are a key driver in the development of NFL practices in third spaces. In the same vein, the theoretical framework I employ suggests network relationships as one of its primary attributes (see section 2.2.5.3) and, based on my observations, it appears that third spaces I investigated in both cities tend to operate in such a

way. Strelka Institute in Moscow (one of the sampled third spaces) can be taken as an illustration. In the research project on educational networks Karovsky (2013) offers a visualization of the development of Strelka's networks[18] (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5 illustrates so-called soft connections (put otherwise, social capital measured in soft connections) across the academic fields and among the students of different cohorts. Figure 6 shows networks development stages during the three years of operation. Karovskiy (2013), nonetheless, argues that being such a relatively small organization like Strelka has an advantage for experimentation and mobility, while interaction and experimentation for larger institutional networks is more challenging.

At this point it is important to note that there is a difference between a flatly networked and loose pointillist landscapes (see section 2.2.5.3). Networks are aimed to work for synergy, while what lies behind the metaphor of a pointillist pattern, so frequently referred by Bauman (e.g. 2005, 2013), is poor orchestring, discord and isolation.

> There are plenty of good projects in Moscow, but people often just do their good thing alone and in isolation. I think what they need is good PR and a professional networking strategy. (Interview, Moscow, October 2013)

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[18] Apart from the public lecture program, Strelka runs an urban research laboratory and a multidisciplinary master program.
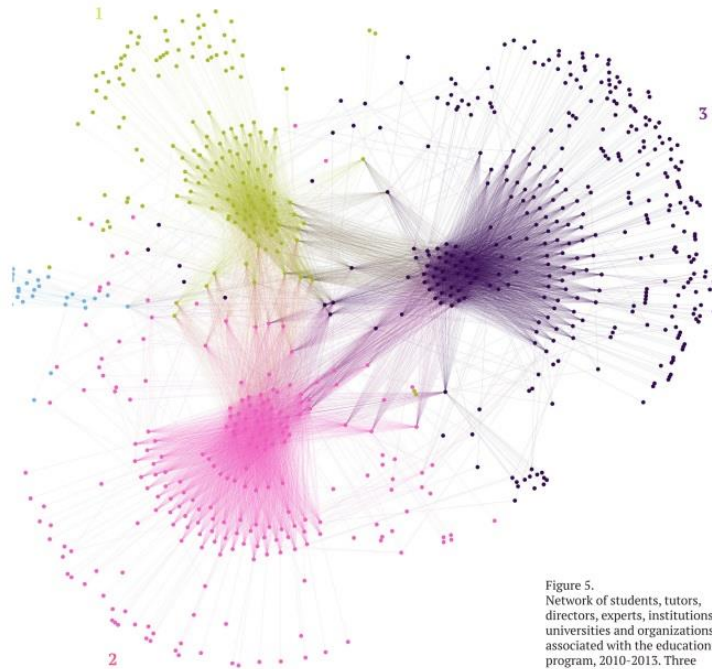
Figure 5.
Network of students, tutors, directors, experts, institutions, universities and organizations associated with the education program, 2010-2013. Three colors represent three years: 1 2 3. The map includes 771 nodes and 13,452 connections.

Figure 6. Network of students, tutors, institutions, organizations etc. associated with Strelka Institute during 2010-2013. Source: www.strelka.com. Obtained with permission.

Figure 8.
Network of the education program in 2010-2011.The map includes 199 nodes and 3,103 connections.
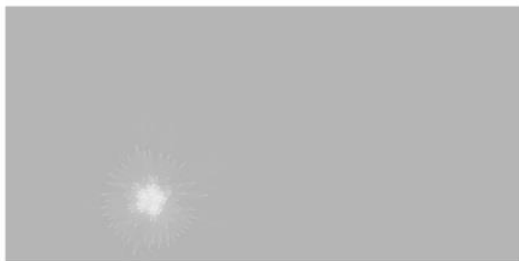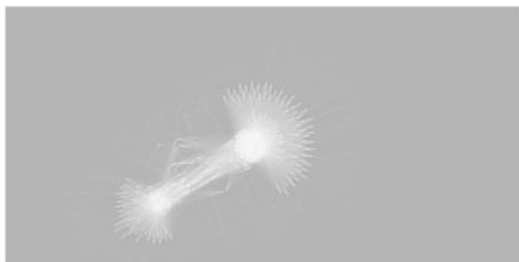
Figure 9.
Network of the education program in 2010-2012. The map includes 413 nodes and 8,388 connections.
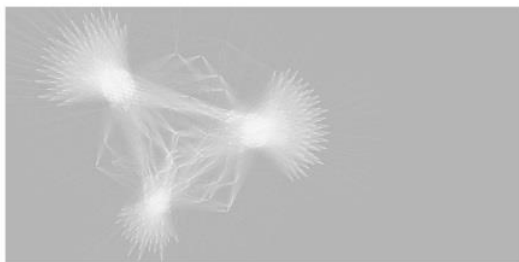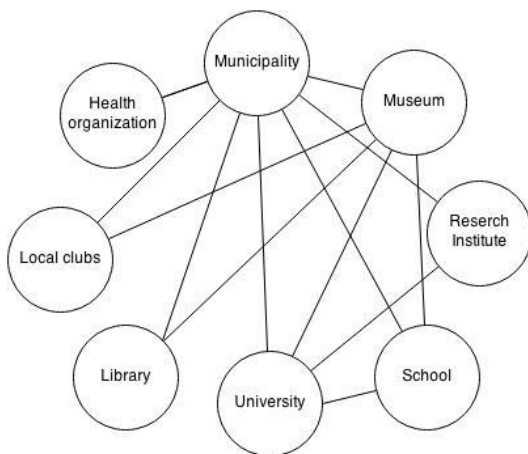
Figure 10.
Network of the education program in 2010-2013. The map includes 771 nodes and 13,452 connections.

Figure 5. Network patterns for Strelka Institute as for 2010-2013. Source: www.strelka.com. Obtained with permission.

In this regard, if we look at the way third spaces build networks around them, we will see two not polar, but varied patterns of distributed network interaction in the two cases of Oslo and Moscow.

Figures 8 and 7 do not aspire to be all-encompassing and accurate as they are based only on my observations and interviews. These patterns illustrate the degree to which the sampled third spaces address social challenges by building networks with various actors in the city across the field of education and beyond.

Figure 7. Sample network pattern for a third space in Moscow
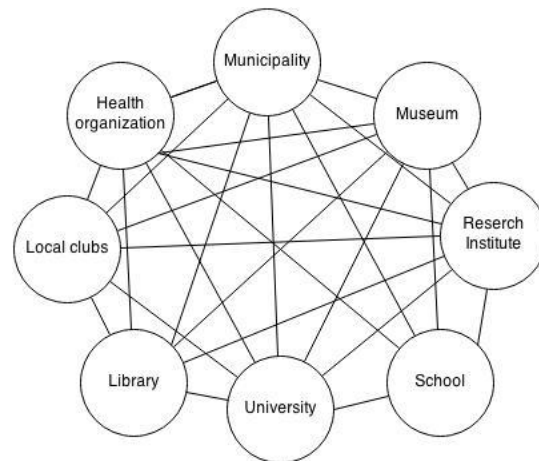
Figure 8. Sample network pattern for a third space in Oslo

It appears that the pattern in Oslo (Figure 8) is more diverse, interconnected and flat, while a sample network in Moscow (Figure 7) fits well into the idea of center-periphery hierarchal organization (e.g. in the way how all organizations adhere to the authorities and loosely interact with each other). The latter observation appears to be well in line with Kagansky's (2013) interpretation of the cultural landscape in Russia (see section 1.1.1).

In relation to networks, back in the mid-90s Putnam (1995) particularly emphasizes the network power of religious affiliation, work unions, nonprofit agencies, etc. for building a democratic community. I assume that it is not only that time has changed but also that context matters. Based upon my data it seems that while networks created by NFL practices and around third spaces in both Moscow and Oslo are, to different extents, extensive and the actors are involved in meaningful interaction, these networks are likely to be too loose and liquid to form a stable clientele that can be seen as a foundation for social capital. Despite

that, however, I argue that networks around and among third spaces in the city powerfully contribute to building a richer sociocultural and, in the case of Oslo, also civil landscape.

Thereupon, I have discussed the connections and networks constructed among the third spaces and beyond on the examples of Oslo and Moscow. In this respect, it is also important to look at how NFL practices develop at the convergence of off- and online spaces or, put in other words, in hybrid third spaces.

4.2.2   Hybrid third spaces

Good evidence for the significance of physical third spaces for NFL can be found in the realm where the offline learning blends with the online. Hybrid learning in this interpretation is a mixed methods approach to education where online compliments offline and the other way around. It is often discussed as one of the most likely scenarios for the future of education (e.g. Britl[19], 2013; *Daphne Koller*, 2012[20], *Online Education Changing the World*, 2013).

What seems to be of particular interest to my inquiry is the way online NFL interacts with physical learning spaces. One illustration is a recent project, launched in October 2013,— Coursera[21] Learning Hubs. As described in the press release (Coursera, 2013, para. 1), Learning Hubs "offer people around the world physical spaces where they can access the internet to take a Coursera course, while learning alongside peers in an interactive and facilitated setting." Initial partners, or in other terms, "nodes" of the global educational network, include a variety of universities, third spaces (libraries and museums) and other private and public organizations.

The need for creating physical third spaces came from the extensive debate on the major flaw of online learning—that is its inability to create engaging learning environments that can keep students committed (recent statistics show only a 10% completion rate globally (Kolowich, 2013[22]). As most of the criticism goes, even classrooms taught by poorly trained teachers in least developed settings allows students to build relationships with teachers and each other,

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[19] The Guardian (www.theguardian.com)

[20] Daphne Koller is a co-founder of Coursera project.

[21] Coursera is a Stanford-based education platform that partners with top universities and organizations worldwide to produce free courses online.

[22] The Chronicle of Higher Education (www.chronicle.com)

thus, providing something that large-scale online courses with most prominent professors cannot. Some of the experts argue that even small online classes struggle to create intimate teacher-to-student and student-to-student bonds that appear to be among critical factors for the retention and quality. In this connection, Haber (2013)[23] notes:

> Even at its worst in terms of teacher-to-student ratios, traditional schooling at least allows student work to be graded by humans (vs. servers), creating the opportunity for more complex and challenging assignments. In theory, this part of the educational equation is to be handled online (…) or the social media. And if you peek into the facebook discussion board of any MOOC class (…) you'll find lots of discussion threads, most of them very high quality. But if you were to count up the number of exchanges (formal and informal) that take place in just a one-hour face-to-face study situation, you'll see that even the most active discussion boards can't possibly keep up with that level of content generation. And given that a majority of human-to-human communication is supposedly non-verbal, the use of smileys cannot mask the fact that online interaction is simply a different creature than face-to-face learning. (Haber, 2013)

This view can be extended with an argument that the original "disturbing" role of a teacher is downsized by MOOCs to the level of being instrumental and detached (see section 2.1.1).

Another relevant implicit inference—out of the alignment with Coursera—is an argument, made by one of the informants, that digitalization in education, when bet on alone, is not a sustainable driver for the development.

> In the end it all appears to be about the art of classroom facilitation and creating quality offline learning environments which MOOCs can reinforce, but not create by themselves. Digitalization is barely a tool. (Interview, Moscow, October 2013)

This agrees well with some of the voices from the global policy-makers (e.g. Van Damme, 2013) and numerous voices from academia (e.g. Fullan, 2010). In a local perspective, MOOC-fever generates agitated discussions of its value, application and transferability at the levels of the state as well as among teacher community (e.g. Kolowich, 2013a; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2013). While in donor-dependent education systems MOOCs often compliment formal education (Lane & Kinser, 2012), in the cases of Moscow and Oslo, Coursera partners with third spaces developing majorly in the field of NFL (there is no Hub in Oslo as such, but there are regular offline non-facilitated "meet-ups" in libraries and cafés). In

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[23] Jonathan Haber is a "clinical researcher" of MOOCs, founder of ww.degreeoffreedom.org/

this sense, Coursera Learning Hubs also illustrate how traditional third spaces such as a library or a cultural center can obtain a new function by hosting temporary classrooms for MOOC students (like in NY as announced by Kolowich, 2014).

From a wider perspective, the need for localization and animation of internationalized content provided by MOOC programs throws light on the social phenomena that counters the homogenizing forces of globalization. It is a kind of inertness that gravitates people towards creating physical and more diverse learning communities.

The following section will discuss the findings that highlight the importance of NFL practices in third spaces for a more cohesive and interconnected society.

4.3   Social Cohesion

The most critical and challenging aspiration expressed by all the informants was to build bridges among diverse social groups in the city. This section is particularly important to my thesis as it brings up the most controversial issues such as the struggle to build multicultural communities.

To begin with, it needs to be noted that local studies in both Moscow and Oslo express similar concerns regarding a certain affectation of the media and political discourse that deepens the marginalization of cultural minorities and sharpens the borderline (e.g. Andersen & Biseth, 2013). Similarly, some studies in Moscow (e.g. Slon, 2014[24]) heavily criticize the social construction of such "othering" identities as *nelegal* (illegal migrant) or *gastarbeider* (guest worker) by the media and politicians. It is rather apparent that such negatively colored (and sometimes downright de-humanizing) social labels can largely contribute to more social fragmentation and, in many instances, to xenophobic sentiments (see section 2.2.3.1). In such a context, it is highly important, as one of the informants put it, to have:

> (…) an ambitious goal to contribute to social cohesion of the society which may sound too big [ambitious], but I strongly believe that it is the common cultural and educational context that brings cultures, social classes and other groups together. (Interview, Moscow, September 2013)

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[24] Minutes from a public debate *Anti-immigration protests in the West and in Russia: what lies behind public sentiments*, 28 March 2014, Retrieved from: www.slon.ru/calendar/event/1081880/

This standpoint was voiced more resolute in Oslo.

> Unlike museums that target a wider and irregular audience of tourists and locals we are, by all means, a local space. And we have no choice but to relate to the reality of diversity in the city. We have to think seriously on how to attract the audience that actually reflects the urban social landscape. (Interview, Oslo, November 2013)

And in a similar vein:

> We are expected by the society to be more than just a museum. (…) in such a way, we are bound by social challenges, but free in the way how to address them. (Interview, Oslo, December 2013).

And, additionally, from the side of the attendees:

> I like being there because the place feels open, inclusive and engaging. (Interview with a Litteraturhuset attendee, Oslo, March 2014)

Among other things, this data suggests a difference between a classical (or, alternatively, a globalized) cultural institution that may exist in a vacuum, isolated from the real life of the city (like a museum of the ancient history or the opera),—and a third space that is, in principle, embedded in the community life and is expected to reflect upon and react to its challenges. In this connection, it is observed that museums in Moscow work for a very narrow audience: only 10% of the population visit museums more than once a year and regulars constitute less that 1% (MISCP, 2013).

The desire to be a *local* community space seemed to be widespread in Oslo, but it was also articulated in Moscow. Below is a quote noted down from a lecture held by one of the programming directors of Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow (observation, Moscow, February 2014):

> We think that the mission of museums is not just to conserve but to communicate with the visitors and the community. We try to create such a community by not simply sharing the knowledge, but situating it locally and making our museum a place for socializing. We expect feedback, reaction, we want involvement. In this sense, an educational [NFL] program is the most efficient tool for building a loyal community. (Khaiphez, 2014)

This discussion on social cohesion, which NFL practices in third spaces can contribute to, is among other things stimulated by the increasing heterogeneity innate to all big cities. In the interviews I was particularly interested to understand how the informants view the urban diversity and address its challenges in practice.

4.4   Diversity

It appears that all of the respondents in their own words gravitated towards the contact theory (see section 2.2.5.1). It argues that the more you bring people of diverse backgrounds together, the stronger social capital you accumulate and a more solidified sense of community you create.

> I feel that there is a strong need to bring people together [in public spaces], the need to be together simultaneously, see things happen live and be a part of the public debate (interview, Oslo, November 2013).

The understanding among the informants of what constitutes diversity was, however, divergent and culture-specific. If we take the informants in Moscow, it can be observed that on the level of manifestation most of them mentioned ethnicity, religion, age, physical ability and lifestyle diversity, consciously or unconsciously omitting gender and sexuality while, expectedly, in Oslo these issues were recalled along with the other types of urban diversity.

> I'd like to see more people come to listen to female thinkers. It actually feels a little offending that the male audience doesn't feel like attending events that are held by female speakers. It is provoking for me. In the opposite case, when men come to talk on the stage, women attend in great numbers. (Interview, Oslo, November 2013)

Moreover, my observations showed that a typical "participant profile" in both cities is rather homogeneous. The audience is mostly white-skinned and, as most of the informants assumed, with quite a substantial cultural and social capital. Based on both my observations and interviews, despite the attempts to diversify demographics, it is predominantly well-educated female audience in the age range from 50 to 70 in Oslo, and a young and freshly educated crowd in Moscow (interviews and observations, Moscow/Oslo, fall 2013). Overall, this largely agrees with the findings from the surveys on cultural practices (MISCP, 2013, Statistics Norway, 2013), whereas the age difference can likely be explained by the

substantial socioeconomic gap between the retired population in Russia and Norway (OECD, 2013a).

It is, however, not an argument in favor of the conflict theory which suggests that, for various reasons "diversity fosters out-group distrust and in-group solidarity" (Putnam, 2007, p. 142), but an indication of the complexity of bringing different people together. As one informant in Oslo stressed:

> It is much easier to create special programs for adolescent immigrants or even whole families with non-Norwegian background, but bringing diverse cultural and social groups together is a far more challenging objective. (Interview, Oslo, October 2013)

Above all, diversity is an ambiguous and deeply contextualized concept, which means that there are no universal cases and each particular culture or community figures who they see as "the other" and who as "the insider".

In this regard, the informants from ZIL and Strelka Institute in Moscow highlighted how contextualized the understanding of diversity may be even within a seemingly homogenous society. For instance, the informants in Moscow when asked about the types of diversity first accounted for the cultural and religious heterogeneity, but then emphasized the "soviet vs. modern mindset divide" which is, in a way, a local cultural code developed in the last decade (Ragozin, 2005[25]; The Economist, 2011[26]). The first element of the binary is generally seen as close-minded, delusional and rigid. "Modern", is otherwise—flexible, open-minded and as a rule westernized. Ironically, for over 70 years "modern" was used to signify a full synonym to "soviet". However (and even more ironically), in the most recent political and state-fueled media discourse the perception pendulum of "the soviet mindset" has been swinging in favor of its romanticization and resurrection back to its original connotations (Ragozin, 2005; The Economist, 2011). At the same time, the independent media has been, on the contrary, seemingly intensifying the soviet-modern polarization between those who are in sympathy with current "back to USSR" state policy and those holding different opinions.

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[25] BBC news, *Thorny legacy of "Soviet Man",* (09/05/2005)

[26] The Economist, *The long life of Homo sovieticus*, (10/12/2011)

This cultural clash is quite evidently reflected in the media discourse around the third spaces in Moscow where the previous generation, who has been at the head of traditional soviet third spaces like libraries and museums, are largely discarded and labelled as "soviet-minded" (interview, Moscow, August 2013). The most apparent case of it is ZIL cultural center which was recently re-branded and re-staffed form scratch causing a wide media debate on whether there was anything valid at all in the "soviet" NFL practices and how radically modernization should be implemented (and, above all, is there any substantial change at all). In this media debate one of my informants particularly advocated for the appropriation of such concepts as "management of cultural industries", "creative economy" as well as productivity and abolishment of "infeasible socialist projects" (Zelenzova, 2012[27]).

Nevertheless, even in the case of ZIL neoliberal discourse co-exists with such inherently social values as "the quality of public life for all" or "education as a fundamental right" which overall seems to add up to the overarching idea of liquidity.

I return to the case of ZIL cultural center later in section 4.6.1.1, and now focus more on how the concept of community is perceived by those who attempt to facilitate its creation.

4.5   Community

In the idea of a community, which is at the heart of the whole third space conception, the most challenging task is seen to be in the construction of bridging social capital, i.e. "ties to people who are *unlike* you in some important way" (Putnam, 2007, p. 141). This assertion was vastly supported by the informants. The more layers of diversity there are, the harder it is to find common grounds, particularly in large urban environments. And while capitalizing on bonding social capital is a natural strategy, it is apparently not enough in the increasingly multicultural urban contexts where generalized trust and a sense of belonging are often challenged.

Yet, while on the level of proclamation the informants in Oslo and Moscow expressed a similar ambition to accommodate urban diversity and foster "a mixing capacity of the city" (see section 2.2.4), *de facto* it was mostly third spaces in Oslo that seem to have functioning

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[27] The Interview, (04/2012)

projects. Whereas there are some isolated cases of good practice in Moscow targeted to families from disadvantaged backgrounds, "there is hardly any case of a successful or promising project for immigrants or elderly citizens in Moscow" (interview, Moscow, September 2013), not to mention the absence of practices that would blend diverse groups under the same roof. Among other things, it may likely reflect an overall lack of recognition of their vulnerable status on a higher political level and, subsequently, effective social policy aimed at these groups.

Below is a case from the Moscow context which illustrates how third spaces can tackle the dilemmas of diversity by unconsciously contributing to yet more social segmentation.

> Several years ago we received funds to re-design the whole library so that it would be adopted and conducive to people with different physical abilities. We were not the first library to do so in Moscow, but we had very little experience. So we went to visit other libraries in the country that claimed to be friendly to people with limited mobility. One such library that we visited had no ramps. This fact puzzled us at the beginning, but the explanation turned out to be simple. The programs for mobility-challenged visitors didn't imply them to come over: books were delivered home and picked up later by the staff. It was a well-meant, expensive and a seemingly convenient solution for everyone. But this is not the idea we have in mind. We want people to come here and share the same space, see each other. (Interview, Moscow, August 2013)

Beyond all, the above quote illustrates the principle of synchronization (see section 2.2.5.2). Another example of adverse inclusion that accords well with the story above came from the informant who is a major partner of the Moscow municipality in social and developmental work.

> What we see as a common practice in the field of social development in Russia is, what I may call, unintentional segregation [adverse inclusion]. It is when money goes to the social events (such as concerts, workshops, lectures, etc.) targeted only at vulnerable groups in question: orphans, immigrant families or other disadvantage groups. While all these activities are well-intended, they do nothing for the integration and inclusion into the wider society. We would like to seek for a different sort of energy—of togetherness rather than one based on compassion. (Interview, Moscow, August 2013).

These cases exhibit how well-meant practices targeted exclusively towards the minority groups may in some instances contribute to the sharpening and reproduction of social boundaries (e.g. between the majority and the minority or physically abled and disabled).

An important remark here is that the creation of common contexts for diverse social groups and more cohesive comminutes does not necessarily mean the erosion of local distinctions for the sake of the meta-identity construction. This deliberate erosion of localities was a significant attribute of the Soviet history, well-reflected in the prefab apartment blocks construction that was in 60s copy-pasted across the country replacing historical wooden architecture: "My address is neither a house nor a street, but the Soviet Union itself" goes a well-known song of 30s. However, some recent studies (e.g. MISCP, 2013) as well as my data register a slow but steady inverse trend for the localization of neighborhoods.

To sum up, based on my data in both Oslo and Moscow, it appears that NFL practices in third spaces may similarly play a role in either maintaining the borders and this way contributing to "othering" or, counter wise, creating space for more inclusive interaction and shared non-formal learning experience.

4.5.1   Invisible people

One possible strategy to meaningfully include marginalized or vulnerable groups into the wider society is through "making them more visible" in the public life of the community (interview, Oslo, December 2013).

> An example of how we try to get in touch with the local community and represent its diversity is through emotional involvement. For example, the exhibition we have about the Norwegian women married to German soldiers during the time of occupation in WW2. It is highly sensitive and even bordering with tabooed, but every day we have elderly women sitting in the exhibition halls quietly together. (Interview, Oslo, December 2013).

Or:

> We can't change people, but we try to create a climate that can make people more accepting and receptive to each other's' stories. With such a thought in mind we plan, for example, to talk about the Roma community in Oslo providing not just a historical perspective, but a deeper discussion on the current voices and dilemmas. (Interview, Oslo, December 2013)

This is an illustration of how a third space (a museum in this case) reaches out to the most sensitive stories that the local community can relate to. It appears to be a powerful tool for the involvement by reflecting upon shared history no matter how delicate and controversial it can

seem. It can be further argued that this sense of belonging to a broader identity (above e.g. the one of the diaspora) increases the feeling of ownership towards the place and, consequently, makes people, among other things, take better care of the city and experience it more as home.

Another specific condition of the Moscow context that stands out in relation to Oslo is the exclusion of senior citizens from the sociocultural public life (MISCP, 2013). It appears to be due to the relatively low quality of life (petty welfare support, poor health etc.), unfriendly public transportation, underdeveloped pedestrian infrastructure in the city (preventing mobility), culturally-wired family responsibilities towards taking care of grandchildren and almost no access to the media where third spaces list and promote their NFL practices (see further in section 4.5.3). These factors combined significantly limit free time and economic resources—the two very factors that seem to be among central to the involvement of senior citizens in Oslo (Statistics Norway, 2013)—making this particular social group mostly invisible in the sociocultural landscape of Moscow.

4.5.2   *Synchronization*

In such a way, an important substance of a third space as a facilitator of social cohesion in the multicultural city is in the synchronization (see section 2.2.5.2) of diverse social groups through engaging them in learning together and, not least, about each other. This idea of synchronization (shared experience synchronized in time and place) is something I will now illustrate with a case story in which one of my informants reflects upon her own biases as a curator of a third space initially educated within a rather homogenous cultural paradigm.

> [In order to create this shared experience] we take one kindergarten in the east of Oslo and one from the west and mingle them in our workshops. It is fairly easy to arrange with schools and kindergartens, but it requires more effort and thought in NFL activities targeted to adults. For instance, to my experience, Pakistani community is not very fond of novels, so it's very hard to attract a crowd even for the most prominent Pakistani writers. We tried and failed. But as it turned out along the way there's a long tradition for oral poetry in the Pakistani culture. And when we tried to make a series of oral poetry events it instantly attracted people from the Pakistani community (as well as others). It's our own biases to rely on certain western intellectual tradition that does not necessarily appeal to everyone. (Interview, Oslo, November 2013)

In this case, social synchronization by bringing a diverse audience in the room depends on a deeper and more sensitive approach to the agenda and a choice of meanings and codes to be transmitted. Another example of NFL practice that aims to address such biases and reach out to those often excluded from the public cultural life is Saladin Days festival mentioned by the same informant. The event engages a manifold urban audience into an in-depth discussion which helps to gradually generate bridging social capital (see section 2.2.5.1).

> Saladin days provide possibilities for religious dialog. These events attract a regular crowd as well as people of minority backgrounds in high quotas. And they come back to organize their own meetings afterwards using Litteraturhuset, in such a way, as a community arena. (Interview, Oslo, November 2013)

The tale about Saladin is captivating, particularly, in the context of this chapter. In 1187 Saladin reconquered Jerusalem from the crusaders. But after his victory he did something unusual—in his times as much as today—he rejected the idea of revenge by opening the city to the three religions for whom it was a holy place. Saladin, thus, ended the war with reconciliation, not with arms. So behind the history of the crusades and "clash of civilizations" there is a story worth telling again, eight hundred years later. It encourages reconsidering the idea of eternal conflict between Christians and Muslims, "us" and "them", and gives an opportunity and inspiration to discuss current topics in a new light, examining the prejudice from both sides of the "Orient" and "Occident" divide. (Adapted from www.litteraturhuset.no/)

In reflection to this case, it appears that in many ways the phenomena of NFL in physical third spaces supports Putnam's idea of bridging capital (2007) by creating common grounds for conversation among people from diverse environments (that is in contrast to mechanic solidarity or bonding capital that are based on the homogeneity of individuals). At this point, the discussion once again comes back to the concept of a community and the way it is constructed and experienced in the city.

4.5.3   Lonely crowd

There is an interesting observation made by one oft-quoted Moscow architect regarding an aggressive culture of individualism in Moscow resulted from a critical historical saturation with grand collectivist ideals of the Soviet past (Grima, 2011). In other words, Grima (2011)

implies that critical saturation generated an almost radically individualistic social response which is apparent in the everyday life of Moscow.

> A bare look outside the window shows cars chaotically parked in the public spaces, playgrounds and green zones. This outrageous attack on public space is a wild desire to stick out their own singularity, which historically can be understandable, but seriously lowers the quality of public life and a sense of security. (Grima, 2011)

This way, by even physically living in Moscow for many years you may actually not develop a feeling of belonging to the place (Grima, 2011). One of the informants reflected on the culture of individualism in a similar vein:

> There is almost no third space in Moscow apart from commercial. Private [personal] space is limited to one's apartment, beyond is a "transit zone", "a no man's land". We, on the contrary, try to create this public social space that is neither an art space, nor is a promotion of new business projects. (Zelenzova, 2012)[28]

Or:

> The state likes to prioritize the development of "hard" urban infrastructure such as building roads and large beautiful opera houses, while often ignoring the soft infrastructure of human, cultural, educational or environmental nature. The latter, in the long run, is a much more important investment. (Interview, Moscow, September 2013)

From the above it can be deduced that one key to social behavior in the urban environment is the level of generalized trust and accumulated social capital rather than hard infrastructure, which can be supportive or otherwise towards this soft infrastructure.

4.6   NFL Practices as a Private or Collective Good

This discussion on how educational practices in third spaces can benefit the social fabric of the city brings about a more theoretical debate on to what degree education is an individual or collective good in the liquid modern societies. As one of my informants stated:

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[28] From *The Interview*

> (…) we build upon "the collective" in the city, and not that much on "the individual". Our NFL practices are about creating a better common place for life rather than a personal benefit. (Interview, Moscow, August 2013)

This stance agrees well with the overall social message transmitted by the third spaces in Oslo, for example, in the Annual Report of OsloBy Museet:

> (…) der mallet har vært å få flere med minoritetsbakgrunn inn i museene (…)[29]. (Extracted from Årsmelding 2012, Oslo Museum)

Or in the official message of Litteraturhuset:

> The House of Literature devotes special attention to reaching out to youths and young adults with immigrant background, especially through workshops during school holidays. Providing these groups with an arena, and thereby helping their voices to be heard, is an important task for the House of Literature. (Cited from www.litteraturhuset.no)

Moreover, even such seemingly politically neutral places as Norsk Teknisk Museum specifically emphasize their interest in the work with visitors of manifold backgrounds and with different abilities through exhibitions and other learning activities, for instance, through "Et lite stykke Helse-Norge—Portrett av Helsesenter for papirløse migranter": reflection upon the situation of undocumented immigrants; or "Dark Garden: Wired in a different way": a discussion about people with autism (data from Norsk Teknisk Museum Årsrapport 2012).

> We should be a safe place for people to come to remember their old stories and roots. For instance, we work with elderly people with dementia, both in fairly homogeneous and, importantly, in heterogeneous districts of Oslo where one may find many elderly people who lived their youth in their homeland. We are not nursing or teaching people with dementia, but gather them to remember and share their personal stories. (Interview, Oslo, December 2013)

The way most of the informants manifested the value of "the collective spirit" in the context of a multicultural city is in line with what Delor reflects upon in the well-known UNESCO report "The treasure within" (1996). When he elaborates on the current challenges the world faces in education, the second after globalization comes "contemporary individualism"—the feeling of being lost in a "lonely crowd". Delor (2013) connects this with the decline of

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[29] The goal is to attract more people with a minority background into museums.

traditional relationships and the triumph of competitive spirit in the society. Interestingly, he associates this feeling "of being a sole judge of oneself" with the recession of religion, which for so many centuries has been a key provider of third spaces in the North and South alike.

4.6.1.1   The case of ZIL cultural center

At this point I will take a short historical detour in order to illustrate how the idea of a third space changed throughout the century. For this reason I will use the case shared by the informant who is the current head of ZIL cultural center. In the early 30s of the USSR the role of third spaces as nucleus for the construction of social and cultural capital was of enormous significance and, indeed, a highly political project. While it was largely due to its evident and aggressive propagandistic agenda, here I would like to focus more on the ambitious aim to disseminate literacy, knowledge and culture (all three being certainly political domains themselves). The social objective was to integrate and educate millions of former farmers dislocated from their land by the two major sociopolitical projects of the 30s—forced industrialization and collectivization.

Erected on the grounds of a destroyed monastery (a powerful symbol of the tectonic shift from what was perceived as "traditional" to "modern") ZIL cultural center constitutes a heritage constructivist building of concrete and glass. It incorporated all attributes of the modern culture as conceived in those visionary times: a cinema, several lecture halls, drama studio, rehearsal halls, library and even an astronomical observatory. To fulfil the role of a high-speed social lift, ZIL cultural center served as a third space and the most innovative NFL hub for that time. Formulated in political terms, its aim was majorly in reducing class distinctions (interview, Moscow, September 2013).

Nowadays, it is still a state funded third space but a story of a very different sort. While its update of programs is impressive, the audience they choose to target is, as one of the outsider informants put it, " at best, comfortable"—teenagers whose parents can pay well, a hipster folk and students from top universities crowding the public lectoriums (Interview, Moscow, August 2013).

> While as a state-funded establishment we can't be a place for just young people
> from educated middle class families we, nevertheless, try to specifically focus on

> attracting people who are referred to nowadays as a "creative class". (Zelenzova, 2012)

Seen from another perspective, this can be partly a result of the neoliberal agenda which sidelines expertise-intensive and pricy projects as unpromising (see section 2.1.1) and makes such work as with cultural minorities, elderly and people with special needs inconvenient for the outcome-based reports (since its value is often in the very process and measurable effects that can take unpredictably long and be hardly documentable). This appears to be a sound reason on what is wrong with a deliberate commodification and commercialization of public third spaces.

This can be summarized with an argument expressed by the chief designer[30] (and simultaneously the director of Strelka, one of my sample places) of Gorky Park, the most significant third space in Moscow in the last three years.

> At the stage of writing the conception design for Gorky Park there was something that bugged me, and now when the popularity of the place is at its full swing—this concerns me even more. Who needs the park most? I believe someone who has not got enough money for a car or a country house. Seems that this clientele should be of the most focus, right? But when we design the park we think of an elderly lady from the neighbourhood in the last place. Why? Because she looks somewhat not that "pretty" on the background when you give a TV interview as the head of department of culture. This elderly lady is not trendy [she does not fit the glossy picture], and she sort of makes it harder to pretend that we did a good thing for everybody. Well, if we exclude her, we do not get any social transformations at all (Oskolkov-Tsentsiper, 2014).

4.7   NFL Practices in Neoliberal Contexts

The debate on the individual and collective value in NFL flows into the question of who has the right to regulate and shape the educational agenda: state, public or business; and how this power is distributed. This is, indeed, a global discussion that both Norway and Russia have recently been actively engaged in. This neoliberal imperative implies that everyone should fit into the new economic reality of a market by adjusting formal education through e.g. fully

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[30] In 2011 the 120-hectare Gorky Park underwent a major reconstruction: the entrance fee was cancelled and the space was cleared from carnival rides and junk food stalls, while bringing back a traditional soviet vibe: free aerobics, yoga on the fresh grass and ice dancing, river bank cafes, volleyball courts, open air auditoriums and cinemas. The Park soon became the hottest place in Moscow with lines at the weekend, fancy top-priced restaurants and infinite crowds. (The Moscow News, 2011)

integrating into the Bologna system, playing along in the PISA league tables or privatizing schools for presumably better quality which a free market offers (e.g. Torres, 2008).

However, the neoliberal order quite explicitly elbows "nonmarketable" knowledge out of the formal institutions (see section 2.1.1) and, as it often happens, into the NFL spaces where there is no pressure to prepare quality labor. Based on my observations and the analysis of the thematic agendas of the third spaces in Oslo and Moscow this "nonmarketable knowledge" seems predominant. And it is not only "hard to sell" disciples like philosophy or literature (highly popular, for instance, in Litteraturhuset or in similar places in Moscow), but also such fields as cosmology and fundamental science—academic areas that are losing investment in formal institutions due to their stranded costs.

On the other hand, most of the informants in Moscow (and it is a certain difference in relation to Oslo) seemed, to a certain degree, support the neoliberal thinking. It is notable that the most evident emphasis on "the economic efficiency" and the magic "power of free market" came through the interviews in such places as Higher School of Economics (private university and an author of recent educational reform), Polytechnic Museum and ZIL cultural center—all three recently re-staffed with management from a business background (the latter case was elaborated on earlier in section 4.6.1.1). As one of these informants put it:

> (…) one important key to development is to reinforce business thinking and stimulate private investment into culture and education. Non-governmental non-profit enterprises have always been flagship. Think of the best art collections in Europe—they were initially private, or just look at the best museums in the US now. (Interview, Moscow, October 2013)

Similarly, from the context of Oslo:

> We compete for the audience with multiplex cinemas. We would like to make literature a social event a bit like going to the cinema. (Interview, Oslo, Novermber 2013)

Or:

> We find ourselves in the sociocultural circumstances where in order to compete with shopping malls and multiplex cinemas we need to adapt to the reality where "to entertain" often outbalances "to educate". For example, some of our older

professors are reluctant to lecture outside the university walls. At first it was very
challenging to find lecturers for the summer project in the parks. They used to say:
what is next? Lectures squeezed between H&M and Zara in the mall? This, I
cannot, of course, imagine myself. Yet, it all worked out very well in the end and
now we have a queue of lecturers for the next summer willing to join the public
project. (Interview, Moscow, September 2013)

This pressure of cost efficiency is tangible and demands austerity measures, and in the most
cases these changes imply either serious cuts in the program, search for private donors or
partial reconceptualization. An illustration from the Oslo context can be a debate on the fee
introduction in the Norwegian libraries (e.g. Berg Hansen, 2011).

Notwithstanding, one positive example of such marketing thinking is the promotion of new
research and young scholars though public lectures. Over the summer of 2013 the massive
media support in Moscow turned some scientists into public figures (e.g. Zoi, 2014). Such
publicity, while being a marketing tool by its nature, benefits the idea of lifelong learning in
general and, in particular, learning beyond the formal level and job needs. A similar strategy
is undertaken by the Litteraturhuset in Oslo.

We invite young PhD researchers with strong communication skills to speak. These
arrangements are hugely successful. (Interview, Oslo, November 2013)

Moreover, some of the small-scale NFL projects in Moscow are fully based on this
conception and feature only young researcher as speakers.

However, some of the informants expressed their concerns regarding possible hazards of
managerialism and direct application of profit-oriented thinking to sociocultural projects.

I have doubts about this new fashion of hiring business people to run cultural spaces
like a library, for instance. They tend to make everything about money, they "hit the
target [efficiency as understood by economists], but miss the point". (Interview,
Moscow, August 2013)

This can also be seen in line with Bauman (2005) who argues that in the educational context
the neoliberal paradigm restricts the scope of valued learning to human capital,
correspondingly reducing it to the one useful for employability (see section 2.1.1). Such
instrumental view of education is common to most of the global NFL policy reports (e.g.
OECD, 2013b; Patrick, 2010; Werquin, 2010), and is implicitly reflected on the way some of

the school subjects are channeled as compulsory (i.e. valued, relevant and, thus, "a must"), and others into *dopolnitelnoe obrazovanie* (supplementary education: translation from Russian) or *valgfag* (subjects of choice: translation from Norwegian). The latter are positioned as secondary, optional and sometimes belittled. However, while it is evidently the case for the formal education in schools, NFL practices seem to be spared from such divisions and, moreover, based on my observations, the choices of themes reveal a much more integral and organic scope of themes not colored by the market interests (see section 2.1.1).

In fact, in the case of Moscow the anti-consumerist spirit among informants that was rather evident while being hardly mentioned in Oslo. This can, probably, be explained by the rapid social and economic changes Moscow has experienced in the last decade. As one of my informants in Moscow put it:

> We would like to draw people away from Americanized malls. We feel that there is a critical saturation with this all-absorbing consumerist culture that aggressively cultivates individualism, indifference towards social values and superficiality. (Interview, Moscow, August 2013)

The discussion on how public third spaces should operate (or in some cases survive) in the neoliberal reality brings up the issue of the commodification of knowledge and, by extension, the phenomenon of edutainment.

4.8   Edutainment as a Cultural Practice

Smart is the new sexy[31]

Edutainment, a concept frequently coined by the informants to refer to what they do, is generally associated with the forms of either *entertaining education* e.g. gamificated software for classroom, or *educational entertainment* like National Geographic or TED[32]. The use of the term in the context of a social life in the city is wider, but the idea behind remains the same. As one of the informants put it:

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[31] A catchy slogan originated from two TV shows: Big Bang Theory (CBS) and Sherlock (BBC)

[32] TED Ideas Worth Spreading is a non-profit hybrid organization. It started in 1984 as a conference bringing together people from Technology, Entertainment, and Design, but since then its scope has become much broader and www.ted.com contains more than 1500 talks.

> Offline edutainment is a kind of NFL that is enjoyable and fun. It is an alternative to the movies for the first date. (Interview, Moscow, September 2013)

Or similarly:

> Edutainment is the process of being entertained and informed at the same time (interview, Oslo, November 2013).

However, one of the informants admitted a certain off-flavor that the word edutainment casts upon the phenomenon of NFL practices in third spaces.

> The word "edutainment" has a certain negative connotation of superficiality. I think, a Norwegian "underholdende læring" conveys the meaning better (interview, Oslo, November 2013).

Interestingly, "an alternative for a date" in the first quote above was meant literally and, moreover, used extensively in the media being placed in the same category as the movies rather than museums (e.g. Zoi, 2014[33]).

The degree to which entertainment penetrates and transforms education can be further observed on the example of Oslo and Moscow event listings where "popular lectures and debates" section is fitted between "movies" and "exhibitions", so that these activities become a rightful part of the cultural and entertainment agenda (see Figures 9 and 10). In line with the above, a recent survey on the sociocultural practices in Moscow shows that 14% of the respondents attend public lectures as a part of their pastime[34].

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[33] Novaya Gazeta, www.novayagazeta.ru (17/03/2014)

[34] Data from the survey conducted by FOM. Results published online www.theoryandpractice.ru/posts/8655/, and to be published offline in June 2014.
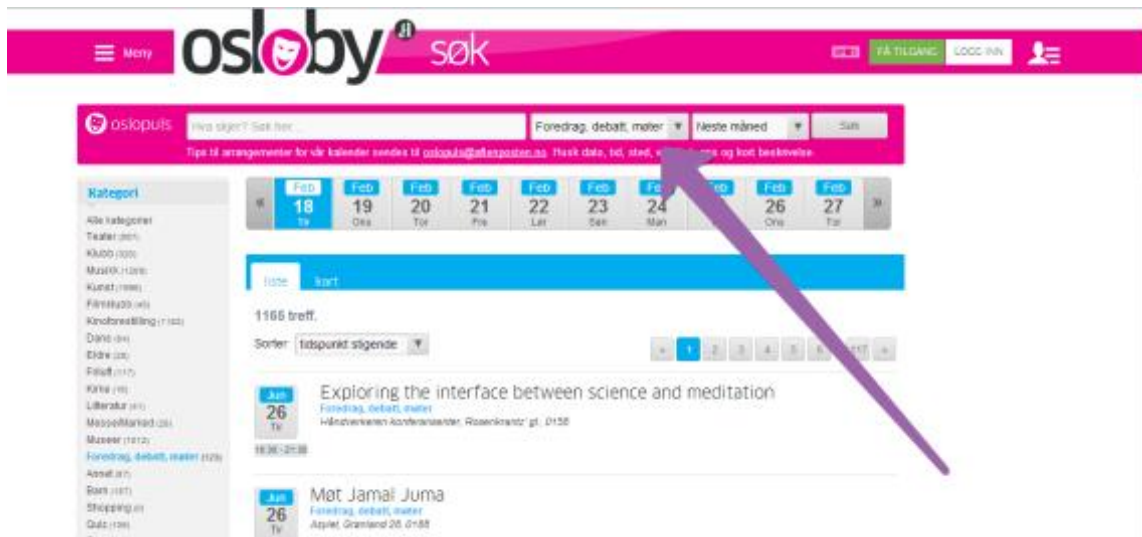
Figure 9. Cultural agenda in Oslo (highlighted category: debates, lectures). Source: www.osloby.no
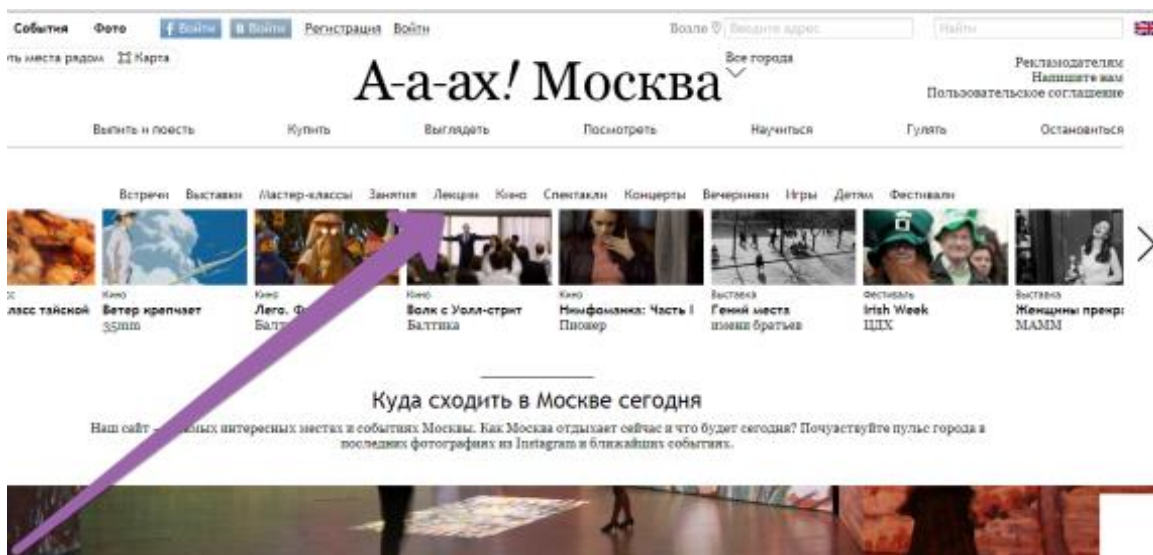
Figure 10. Cultural agenda in Moscow (highlighted category: public lectures). Source: www.a-a-ah.ru

In this connection, the case of Theory and Practice (www.tandp.ru), an entrepreneur edutainment initiative based in Moscow, is also of interest as a rare illustration of not a copy-paste like PechaKucha or Science Slam[35] (both cases are discussed at length further), but a project developed entirely bottom-up without an initial support from formal institutions or the state. The idea was to bring together all the NFL opportunities in the city within the realm of

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[35] PechaKucha and Science Slams are informal and fun gatherings where people of various expertise get together and share their ideas, works, thoughts.

edutainment such as public lectures, discussions etc. under a regularly updated and annotated listing embedded in the social media. Started as a hipster project for a limited audience, in 5 years' time it grew into a steady sociocultural practice for a much wider urban audience and now pools together some of the major museums, universities and the municipality (*How educational practices change the cultural landscape of Moscow*, 2014). Along with that, as an important consequence Theory and Practice has had a substantial impact for the network development among third spaces.

Another reading of the edutainment concept was offered by my informant from the Higher School of Economics, a director of the public program that has wide media coverage in Moscow. While their implicit goal is undoubtedly to brand the university and its young researchers as well as attract potential student, what they actually do goes beyond these marketing objectives and seems to have an ample impact on the sociocultural landscape of Moscow altogether. The two projects "lectures in the parks" (see Appendices 5 and 6) and "university lecturers in museums" are fitted into a wider cultural agenda and also shift a typical network pattern among the third spaces in Moscow (interview, Moscow, September 2013). Illustrations are, for instance, lectures held in a catholic cathedral and in the local municipal house. Both venues may not look so groundbreaking to an outsider eye, but in the particular sociocultural context of Moscow these are truly unconventional partnerships.

4.8.1 Party discourse in NFL

Prominent examples of NFL practices in third spaces that gained popularity in both Oslo and Moscow are mentioned above PechaKucha and Science Slam (or Forsker Grand Prix in Oslo). These formats require an active participation which lifts the audience from the level of observers and consumers to participants and co-creators. The genre is a mix of stand-up performance, public lecture and a leisurely pastime.

> The medium of presentation is free and can range from a more traditional talk to a dance choreography, a stage play or a self-composed song, but the content has to be within the domain of cutting edge science. Everything is allowed to win the votes of

> the audience, in whose hands [literally as measured by the sound a level meter] it is to decide who leaves the stage as the winner of the night. (Neyaskin, 2014[36])

In this case, edutainment is a major conception and "party" discourse is used extensively to promote and position the events (*How educational practices change the cultural landscape of Moscow*, 2014).

> I haven't yet started my speech, but already made a mistake—I chose monochrome and boring colors for my slides. So what I am going to do is add some "cats"—it makes all stories much more fun. (Observation notes, Moscow, September 2013)

At this moment, the audience burst into applause and whistling much more characteristic to rock concerts than to lectures (see Appendix 6).

4.8.2   *McDonaldization and Starbuckization*

A rapidly growing degree of entertainment in education can sometimes be seen as a part of the McDonaldization of education (see section 2.2.3.3.). As I discuss in the theoretical chapter, Starbuckization might be considered as a more elegant and relevant metaphor in relation to third spaces, as it highlights both the unification and "hollowing out" of such places. However, such seemingly empty spaces can be filled with meaning and create a community around itself by means of temporary actualization through NFL practices like it happens with PechaKucha and Science Slams events.

Recently McDonaldization in education has become often associated with online learning as some argue that the principles of MOOCs[37] largely mirror an aggressive marketing strategy of fast-food chains (e.g. Lane & Kinser, 2012; Ritzer, 2012a). Interestingly, it is the exactly same fast-food argument which is generally used in favor of MOOCs—high accessibility and near-to-zero cost (Haber, 2013). In this connection Lane and Kinser (2012) suggest that the mere fact that millions of students across the world are taking the same course simultaneously, with the same content and from the same instructor puts MOOCs at the very forefront of the educational McDonaldization. Moreover, "by promoting centralized knowledge production, MOOC's limit the spillover effects that help build the academic

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[36] *Afisha Gorod*, www.afisha.ru

[37] Massive Open Online Courses

infrastructure of developing nations" (Lane & Kinser, 2012, para. 3). The cost efficiency argument also feeds the introduction of MOOCs into the formal education in other parts of the world including Russia and Norway ("Coursera Secures $43M in Funding," 2013[38]; Kluchkin[39], 2013; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2013).

However, the introduction of earlier discussed Learning Hubs seems to significantly reduce the unifying effects of Mc-impact by localizing the content and facilitating face-to-face interaction.

4.9   Summary

In this discussion I have presented the perspectives concerning the role non-formal learning in third spaces basing my line of argument on the interviews, media and observation data collected in Oslo and Moscow. Within the theoretical framework of liquid modernity theory I looked at the two sociocultural landscapes in order to see how the phenomenon of NFL in third spaces impact the quality of life in the city. In the next chapter I intend to outline the conclusions in accordance with the posed research questions and suggest some possible directions for further research.

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[38] Market Wired (www.marketwired.com), social communication agency.

[39] Lenta (www.lenta.ru), major online newspaper in Russia.

5   Conclusions

"The last two decades have seen tremendous economic, cultural and social change, and the cities have been at the forefront in experiencing and driving this" (World Cities Culture Forum, 2013, p. 2). It often seems as if big cities faced with global challenges are growing more homogeneous and characterless (for what it's worth, they all consist of similar elements: airports, roads, banks, museums, parks etc.) while, on the other hand, there is an overwhelming diversity and unevenness in the urban settings. In order to interpret the discussion on these conflicting trends, Sassen (2013) suggests that all the globalized and standardized go through local filters, some of which are thick and cluttered, some are well-tuned and multi-layered, and others are so thin that the avalanchine forces of the global market and technology burn out all the traces of local distinctness.

Under these conditions, it appears to be a great challenge of today to simultaneously welcome the cultural and economic dynamism that global openness inevitably entails, while at the same time championing and nurturing local idiosyncrasies (e.g. Bauman, 2013). These two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive (one of my most favorite cities in the world, Istanbul, is such an example of historically-conditioned hybridity with, nevertheless, well-preserved distinct locality). Ultimately, aiming at both global competitiveness and local individuality is a difficult task.

As Oldenburg (1999) argues, the fields of social mediation in a city—back several thousand years ago as well as nowadays—are third spaces. Fifteen years ago his thesis was that these medial places were in general decline as he observed that increasingly more people in the US were feeling disconnected from the community. The reason for that was assumed to be the prevalence of alienating and anonymous malls and cloned coffee houses, which, in Oldenburg's opinion, represent *false* third spaces. No sooner was the term coined, than big business queued up to claim that they are creating these new third places. But whether these new third spaces actually play the social mixing role is a big question.

It is commonplace for a café to be full of people with headphones on, speaking on their mobile phones and hacking away at the keyboards, more engaged with their Facebook news feed than with the people touching their elbows. These places are "physically inhabited but psychologically evacuated" which leaves people feeling "more isolated than they would be if

the café were merely empty" (The Economist, 2008, para. 4). Evidenced with from my data, it can be argued that this is probably because the physical presence of other human beings is psychologically arousing but in the "hollow" third spaces produces no reward (but rather frustration resulted from being alone in "a lonely crowd"). To put it otherwise, it seems "that we have not yet evolved biologically to be happy in these situations" (The Economist, 2008, para. 4). Meanwhile, as more false third places pop up and spread, they gradually change the entire sociocultural landscapes of cities.

It has been practically the same process of distancing and hollowing that permeate the domain of education globally. The rise and successive disappointment with MOOCs, which I discuss earlier in the discussion chapter, is just one example of many. However, there seems to be a comprehensive shift towards rethinking of the educational paradigm inspired by the revisiting of the Faure (1972) and the Delors (1996) reports. Ultimately, it is a result of the realization that while economic functions of education are important, there is a need to go beyond the utilitarian vision that characterizes the current international discourse (OECD, 2013b; UNESCO, 2013). It is also a need to recall the role of education as a means of cultural and social development and highlight the importance of values of respect for the human dignity and diversity required for achieving harmony in a complexly pluralized world.

Premised on these thoughts, I had originally conceived of the idea to explore open educational practices in third spaces, firstly, because these sociocultural activates seem to fill the emptiness of third spaces with meaningful and lively interaction. Secondly, this theme provides an opportunity to bridge the need for more intercultural dialog in urban settings as well as the need to increase educational opportunities to learn and develop beyond market-prescribed and individualistic demands.

This way, my objective was to explore how non-formal learning practices conducted in third spaces impact and react to the sociocultural landscape of the city. More specifically, I was interested in the values and meanings invested in the third spaces by their providers, as well as the interaction patterns among third spaces and with the other actors in the city. The illustrative landscapes were the ones of Oslo and Moscow, cities that are well-embedded into these global developments and display complex diversity paradigms as well as rich non-formal learning cultures.

The methodological perspective I chose is one of the providers, people at the helm of formulating objectives and setting the NFL agenda. The method of interviewing was supplemented by observations and the review of the media.

The theoretical framework I employed to interpret the results can be metaphorically viewed as a quilt, where various patches represent interrelated concepts and theories (such as social capital, connectivism, social construction of space etc.), while a red thread that knits them all together is the liquid modernity theory (Bauman, 2005, 2013). (A quilt is a metaphor for a multicultural city as well where the diversity of patches makes it attractive, backing lining of shared experience thickens it and the threads of common values merge them all together into one piece).

I believe that the discussion in my study has demonstrated the existence of a number of these common themes in how NFL practices in third spaces interact with and impact the sociocultural landscapes of cities. As I mention elsewhere I did not aim to compare the contexts, but rather to explore a shared phenomenon, so this concluding chapter seeks to pull out four core themes and consider their implications.

5.1   Beer, Science, Rock'n'roll[40]

The first issue which can be noted as emerging is the convergence of education and entertainment in NFL practices—edutainment. On the one hand, the popularity of open party-themed events like PechaKucha or Science Slams signifies that such interactive educational practices are in universally high demand, which, based on my data, can be likely explained with a certain saturation with commodified (e.g. adapted to TV) and "marketified" (e.g. valued only if it bring revenue in the end) knowledge that most people encounter in their everyday life after formal schooling is over.

However, it is of note that both projects that I use to illustrate the concept of edutainment have been copy-pasted to Oslo and Moscow from "a global repository of good urban practices", which makes them practically spare of any locality (indeed, the photographs from PechaKucha in Moscow are indistinguishable from the ones taken in Oslo). What differ

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[40] A slogan of Science Slam events.

although are the themes that participants consider interesting and relevant. Looking ahead, it might be useful to further study and compare the implications behind the way these global NFL practices glocalize, enrich and co-exist with locally-rooted projects.

Another issue related to edutainment seems to be the wording itself which, in my opinion, is too narrow to gather NFL practices in third spaces under its umbrella. What I see faulty with the concept "edutainment" in this particular case, is that it implies that education is a sort of a bitter medicine in need of sugar-coating of entertainment to become appetizing, which makes entertainment come as a reward if one is willing to suffer through a little education. Alternatively, it suggests that it will be so much fun that one will not even realize they are learning—as if learning were the most boring and unpleasant experience in the beginning. Beyond this, "entertainment" and "education" both suggest a focus on things that others provide for you, rather than things that you do yourself. It might seem like a quibble, but the words can make a great difference in how people think and reason.

5.2 Communities Out-of-sync

A second issue emerging from the data is social de-synchronization in urban communities caused by a range of factors that include immigration influx, digitalization of human interaction, dramatic changes in family patterns and overall loss of traditional community bonds (OECD, 2001, 2013b; UN Habitat, 2013; UNESCO, 2013). Moreover, such stratification is intensified by globalization that along with its advantages brings about inequality, particularly striking in urban settings. This is because in order to have a lively sociocultural landscape with a multiplicity of low key third spaces, a city needs a solid middle class that would create a market for cafes, shops, museums, and other third spaces. However, a growing income imbalance prevents such a common landscape to emerge and develop in many of the modern big cities especially in the global South (UN Habitat, 2013; World Cities Culture Forum, 2013). The reason is that the rich naturally like to live in folio: Troubina (2011) makes an example of Manhattan that has become so densely inhabited by the wealthy that the local public life was eventually forced to move to other neighborhoods (interestingly, this change is traceable in the choice of location set outside Manhattan for many of the recent TV shows that narrate the life of the ordinary people). Conclusively, such condition of inequality and segregation inflicts change to social life and third spaces, by extension.

Nevertheless, Oslo and Moscow seem far from critical in terms of segregation. It is partly due to their socialistic backgrounds (which in many ways determined a blended type of urban layout), and partly due to their historical design: both cities have been developing organically in the course of a thousand years. However, massive gentrification and replacement of historical third spaces (e.g. city markets) with hollow and sterilized places like malls—are quite familiar phenomena in both cases.

My argument regarding the significance of third spaces and NFL practices in them is, then, supported by the need to (re)create the bridges between increasingly pluralized and diversified population. Yet, it is not a polemic regarding the building and maintenance of museums, cultural centers, public libraries, etc., but rather creating "soft" cultural infrastructure that would promote intergroup interaction and engage with hard-to-reach communities. In this sense, NFL practices appear to play an important part.

I will extend this thought further by arguing that, in many ways, the value of NFL practices in third spaces is in generating and maintaining a sense of belonging and generalized trust in multicultural communities by means of raising awareness about one another, bringing various social groups together for discussions and, importantly, by creating a shared and joyful learning experience.

5.3   The Normal State of Atmosphere is Turbulence[41]

It has become trivial to say that the only constant in modern life is change. In fact, seen through the liquid modernity theory, change is its principal foundation along with diversity in all its possible forms (and it is this diversity that is often accused to be a reason for the mentioned above de-synchronization of communities). These two conditions of human co-existence in the global world, by all means, involve a degree of permanent turbulence in the social as well as in cultural, economic and political life.

Based on my findings, it seems that NFL practices in third spaces position themselves both as reacting to these turbulent conditions (e.g. by adopting agendas and recruiting new audiences)

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[41] A metaphor borrowed from meteorology.

and ignoring them (e.g. by choosing to focus on educational practices that are fun and "easy to sell").

As the informants argued, idealistically third spaces in cities are conceived to become meeting and mixing arenas for people to mingle, create and negotiate a local culture. However, while the world is becoming more interconnected and flat, simultaneously it builds new borders and constraints reflected, for instance, in the political efforts to fish out, restrain and control, in the grand scheme of things, powerless and vulnerable people. Sassen (2013) argues that such measures are a simplistic and essentially populist way to deal with the turbulence brought about by diversity. She further suggests that no matter how high you construct the fences (both physical like in Israel, Spain or USA and virtual like, to a certain degree, in Norway and Russia) they hardly ever work in the long run. This means that the solution is not that much in *control*, but in the art of *managing* these currents of people, cultures and ideas.

5.4   Fences and Curtains

The theme for my last conclusion outflows directly from the previous reflection. Three years ago when I first came to Oslo I experienced a minor cultural shock—the curtains on the windows were almost never shut (if existed at all). Captured by my curiosity, I used to spend evenings walking the streets and watching this unveiled life. Such cultural idiosyncrasy continues to both impress with its demonstrative transparency and makes me uneasy at the same time as I, myself, cannot possibly imagine a home without curtains. This conciseness of spatial demarcation is, certainly, a soft-wired bias, and a cultural code that I share with most of my fellow countrymen. I assume, in the same way, endless gates and poling will probably cause anxiety and annoyance for someone used to unfenced spaces and permanently deactivated entry gates in the subway.

I believe the metaphors of fences and curtains suit well to my argument for the significance of third spaces. Imaginary fences and curtains of many sorts seem to be an in-built feature for any contemporary urban society inclusive of Oslo and, to a much larger extent, Moscow. At a glance, it may look contradictory to the most celebrated consequences of globalization— mobility and openness but, as Pieterse (2009) argues, far from the image of a borderless world, the current global condition is characterized by a proliferation of borders. No longer

merely the dividing lines that mark the edge of territories, borders now run through the middle of political spaces establishing a whole different kind of social, cultural and economic divides.

In the case of Oslo such fragmentation is often associated with a high influx of self-absorbed foreign cultures. This fact forces NFL practices, on the one hand, to aim at accommodating this diversity but, on the other, it inevitably challenges them with an objective to simultaneously maintain the integrity of the Norwegian culture (which is a problematic concept by itself). In Moscow, a recently flourished NFL culture seems to run counter to the established hierarchies in education and social life, however, it appears to address mostly the social groups with already well-accumulated cultural capital sidelining the potential for the construction of social bridging capacity.

Against these speculations, it may be concluded that the role of third space is no less important in modern communities than it was in traditional ones. In fact, third spaces appear even more critical in the densely populated urban settings where people often tend to live alone and build looser personal connections. It may, therefore, be argued that NFL practices in third spaces have a capacity to create more cohesive, safer, and happier communities, but to realize this potential it is important to contextualize NFL practices as well as make them more accessible and attractive to diverse social groups.

5.5   Closing Remarks

One important concluding reflection based on the discussion presented above is that the value of NFL practices in third spaces are to be viewed not through the rationalized lenses of an economic return, but through their potential to involve heterogeneous populations and, this way, digest the turbulence of social change. In this sense, NFL practices in third spaces are best conceptualized as primarily a *participatory* space and, indeed, a public good. Unfortunately, these public goods are often marginal in the market-driven world as they have high cost of production, but no selling price.

Against the backdrop, research approaches for the exploration of educational practices in third spaces can be varied. Firstly, it may concern the degree and forms of involvement into the sociocultural life of the city and generation of NFL communities. Secondly, it can look at how

these third spaces are distributed in the city, and what the implications behind such special spatial arrangement are. Another way is to compare third spaces in different locations in terms of their manifested purpose, value attached by the participants and implications for the overall sociocultural landscape of the city. In addition, it might be of interest to narrow the scope and study how third spaces accommodate the interests of certain social groups such as children, immigrants or the elderly.

It is then hoped that this study will inspire further inquiry into the phenomenon of open non-formal learning practices in third spaces, which will enhance the knowledge and understanding of how public life in multicultural cities develops.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide

Template for the interviews with providers of third spaces, approx.45-60 min

1. Introductory comments on my study project and its goals;
2. Core questions:

	Core questions	**Clarifying questions**
Objectives, meanings, value	On the objectives (is there anything specific that distinguishes your place from others?), themes (principles of selection), formats (which works better and why?), clientele (is possible to describe a typical participant profile?), means of promoting events and practices (i.e. what media resources means are used), advantages and disadvantages against formal education, understanding of NFL, how global educational imperatives reflect on NFL practices, on multicultural diversity in the audiences etc.	Can you provide some examples? Can you expand on..?
Interaction with the city	On social challenges in Moscow/Oslo that NFL can address, what issues should be prioritized, what organizations do you network and partner in the city (on the nature of relationships, connections to other educational and cultural organizations, networks that extend the field), on good practices, on the position in relation to other cultural institutions etc.	Can you exemplify … with real cases from your experience?

Appendix 2. Interview guide sample

Site: The Higher School of Economics

Informant: Valaria Kasamara, director for corporate projects, head of research in politics and public life dept., <u>public program curator</u>)

1   Why has the idea of "the university, open to the city" become so widely discussed recently? What triggered public interest? (social, cultural and political conditions)

2   How does a private university benefit from a public program?

3   Who do you see in your public auditoriums now and who would you like to see? Why?

4   What is specific about Moscow NFL context? Why some projects in work (such as…) and some fail to (such as…)?

5   What global and local projects/practices in NFL inspire you and why?

6   What do you manifest as the key ambition, specifically towards the city?

7   What challenges of urban life can such projects as yours address?

8   Some say that Moscow cultural and NFL landscape is scattered and uncoordinated. How do you envision the development of learning in open spaces (NFL) in Moscow?

9   What undercurrents, potentials, and challenges do you see in the global and local NFL terrain?

10 How do global trends, challenges, potentials re-echo in the local context?

11 What changes in social, political or cultural agenda can contribute to the qualitative development and spread of NFL practices in Moscow?

(Some additional questions to other providers that deviate from the sample scenario are e.g.: How is the new concept of a museum lectorium different in comparison with the old soviet model, similar international projects, and other local projects?)

Appendix 3. Observation guide

Observation focus:

- People
- Environment
- Interaction patterns

1   Who are the people in the audience? (sex, age, social groups, if possible to assume)
2   What does the space feel like ("objectively": how does it look like—a class,
    community meeting, debate etc.; and "subjectively": what does it feel like—tense,
    relaxed, engaged etc.)
3   What interaction patterns and modes of communication are practiced among the
    participants and lecturers/facilitators?

Event: place/time/theme/format

Observation	Thoughts, notes	Quotations, remarks
regarding environment		
regarding people		
regarding interaction patterns		
Misc.		

Appendix 4. Data map

The idea organization on the map is following: research questions are placed in the middle
and three main units of findings grow into smaller ideas. The tree is supported by theory
(highlighted in yellow) and case stories (in green). This map was drawn in the earliest stage of
data analysis.

Appendix 5. Photopraphs. Part 1

Appendix 6. Photopraphs. Part 2