I suppose, placing De Certeau in conversation with Schivelbusch, we can think of ‘walking’ as a means of preserving our ability to ‘travel’, otherwise undermined by technological developments in transportation – as a way of immersing ourselves in and experiencing space, and shaping/appropriating it through our idiosyncratic movements through and interactions with our environment.

But what of cities where the pedestrian has become an impossibility, where residents are deprived of the ability to ‘wander’ and therefore denied the ‘travel space’ that keeps them from becoming mere parcels moving from one location to the next? There are very few ‘walkers’ – in de Certeau’s sense of the term – in Dubai, for example. The city’s topography combines with a difficult climate to make the ‘blind wandering’ that de Certeau talks about nearly impossible – a deviation from the hegemonic ways of moving dictated by the ‘ideological city’, in this specific case, would need to be consciously planned and carefully executed, as opposed to following organically from an aggregate of micro-practices through which a resident makes a space her own.

In Dubai, one occupies, rather than inhabits, a space, moving along its surfaces but inhibited from taking transformative root. Spontaneous wandering is almost unmanageable. All journeys must be planned, all excursions outside the home and into ‘the city’ must have a specific purpose and route, and so various locations must always be infused a priori with a utilitarian significance. Space becomes commodified ­– a thing of particular value and purpose from which to extract a need or want before moving on. Dubai then becomes an interesting example of what happens when people are (successfully?) prevented from appropriating the topographical system (de Certeau, p. 97) – it comes to exist outside of them; they become disengaged and apathetic towards their environment, using instead of living in it (instead of shaping it and allowing it to shape them). Living in Dubai, one (at least the expatriate) functions more like a voyeur than de Certeau’s dweller from below, unable to ‘concentrate’ on space (Schivelbusch), journeying between points as opposed to intensely traversing space and allowing this traversal to remake both the city and herself.

As for the concept of ‘place-making’, it pushed me to think about Lebanon and the ‘national amnesia’ often associated with it. The Lebanese, it is often argued, both socio-political elites and average citizens, have actively attempted to forget the fifteen civil war since it ended in 1990. As a consequence, this has led to an overwhelming silence in the face of places and monuments with the potential to provoke powerful, instructive and empathic memories. Perhaps this refusal to ‘make place’ can help explain the *stuckedness* in the present that many claim is characteristic of life in post-war Lebanon, and the feelings of ‘internal exile’ and displacement that the Lebanese regularly refer to.

Many go about their day-to-day lives with a refugee-like disposition, treating the country like a terminal they hope to eventually exit from in order to make their home elsewhere. If, as Basso writes, knowledge of places is closely linked to knowledge of the self, without place-making/the practice of actively sensing a place, can the Lebanese form any kind of collective identity/an awareness of shared experiences/a feeling of common investment in the country? Can they begin to imagine/articulate visions for the future without not only contemplating the past but reading it into the present? Can they be anything but indifferent towards the rapid privatisation, destruction of historical sites, gentrification and other violent forms of urbanisation that have characterised efforts at post-war development?