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Aesthetics of Urban Space through Collaborative Urban Planning: Integrating Environmental Aesthetics with Communicative Theory of Planning

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Abstract

The collaborative urban planning has the potentials to make cities more aesthetically pleasing to the dweller. In this paper, we focus on the strengths of the said theory to bring in the views of the user to the designing process of the urban space. Our current research interest in the Collaborative Planning is also based on its ability to formulate a wider basis for evaluation, development and conservation of the city and its life. We intend to argue that aesthetics, within the current consciousness, is not what is meant by beauty but what makes the man familiar within his dwelling space.

Aesthetic theories help understanding the perception, appreciation or experiencing of the space in everyday life. By developing useful tools to discuss the values of urban space, the contemporary developments in the environmental aesthetics, especially within phenomenological and pragmatist philosophy, could make the communicative planning theory more context-oriented. The current conception of planning as a decision-making process that has little to do with humanistic perspective of the city is to be challenged and provided with alternatives here. This decision-making deals with many practical demands, but its conventional attitude has cost the city life. The communicative theory and collaborative planning as a practice, strengthen inhabitant's relations to the urban space and as such, could create a new as well as manage the existing without losing its links with the users. Once reinforced with phenomenological and pragmatist ideas developed in the environmental aesthetic theories, this new practice could strengthen the urban space to promote dwelling.

Key words: Dwelling, Life-world, Place-making, Value

Introduction: Theoretical Discourse

Environmental aesthetics is a *new* field of study and, does not form any consistent paradigm of research yet. Aesthetics did emerge as a philosophy of its own in the late eighteenth century even though questions concerning 'beauty' have been studied since antiquity.[1] The emergence of the aesthetics as an autonomous field coincided with the development of fine arts that was relieved by the modern-enlightened society from its subordinated role to the church or the royal court. Aesthetics has since been mostly known as a philosophy of art, although some classical works such as Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* dealt with the objects of nature. In the twentieth century the idea of aesthetics as a philosophy of art culminated in analytical philosophy with the analysis of conceptual problems in the field of art, but towards the end of the century, however, questions concerning the environmental aesthetics and aesthetic experience have been taken into consideration anew. Despite the recent widening of the scope of aesthetics, it has not been considered in the planning of the urban environments. Among the reasons for this exclusion are the difficulty of defining the urban environment that is partly nature, partly objects of art, but mostly just different kinds of utilities for daily use, and conception of aesthetics as a term relevant to art. However, the duality of the urban planner and designer, as a facilitator cum controller and creator and enabler respectively, seems to assist brining the aesthetics in to urban planning. The globalisation and the so-called international style, which found beauty as a cosmetic to be added upon has had adverse effects on urban planning. Yet, having emphasised the current cultural approach to nature, in which nature is not considered as what is existing but what the culture wants to see in it, we may be able to enhance the integration of environmental aesthetics in planning urban areas.

Phenomenological and pragmatist aesthetics offer more promising ways to assess the experience of those everyday environments (Dewey, 1934/1980; Berleant, 1992 & 1997; Shusterman, 2000). This facet of environmental aesthetics parallels to the fields of urban studies that examine the experience of space, such as cultural geography and theory of architecture. In the environmental aesthetics the assumption is that aesthetic experience does not only

[1]. Ananda Coomarswamy saw the parallel philosophical developments in the East and West, and has been successful in detailing the so-called Eastern view. It would also be useful to read Ruskin, especially his discussion of beauty and sublime.

belong to the realm of art, but also to the everyday life.[2] The emphasis placed on 'experience' rather than those objects helps the linking between environmental aesthetics with such everyday life too. As a consequence, cultural spheres of cognitive, moral-practical and aesthetic: that have usually been seen as separate realms after Kant's three *Critiques* and Weber's theories of modern society, are reunited in the environmental aesthetics. This reunion is not without theoretical frictions, yet the phenomenological and pragmatist thinking provides with opportunities for bringing the aesthetic experiences of urban space into a theoretical discourse. Phenomenological and pragmatist thoughts are anti-Cartesian in their attempts to overcome the subject-object dichotomy by pointing to the particularity and *situatedness* of the subject of experience. These traditions have emphasised in particular to the *embeddedness* of the theoretical activities in the pre-enlightened world in which our practical activities took place. The two theoretical paradigms hence could question the idea of 'innocent eye' or purified perception, making the urban planners and designers interested in the experience of the user of their spaces.

In both traditions this view originates from the philosophy of science but it has also paved the way for new lines of aesthetic thinking. In phenomenology the primacy of world as 'lived' and experienced is made thematic mainly through the concept of life-world, that is to be one of the key concepts in everyday aesthetics. The concept of life-world was first put forward by Edmund Husserl, but the concept has later had various meanings in phenomenology and in other philosophical traditions.[3] Their interpretation in the theory of architecture and in the cultural geography has been based on Martin Heidegger's account of life-world. Heidegger's key question concerns the *meaning of being* in general, but his focusing onto the human existence is the most important for the urban planners and architects.[4] Heidegger, in his 'Phenomenology of Everydayness', notes that human existence should not be understood in the light of scientific and the detached reflection of the world, but in the light of our practical affairs and concrete involvement with the world. Further, he finds the liberty of human being within the man's involvement in his society. This dialect between individual and individuals in the society is something missing from the modern urban planning.

Aesthetic thoughts have drawn in particular from the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose major concern was human perception of the world. He further develops Husserl's concept of life-world emphasising the bodily being in life-world, continuity between subject and the world and also the continuity between consciousness and bodily being of the subject. As the human being consciously experience the urban space, as an individual or/ and as a member of a group, the emphasis of Merleau-Ponty, in his *Phenomenology of Perception,* appears more than useful concept. Pre-conceptual nature of the life-world, where experience is not defined, it is neither aesthetics nor cognitive in its nature, according to him. These phenomenologists did not directly apply the concepts of life-world in aesthetics, the pragmatist thoughts have already carried out this in the classical pragmatism of John Dewey (1934/ 1980). Contemporary works of pragmatist aesthetics of Richard Shusterman (2000) and Arnold Berleant (1992, 1997) definitely go beyond these limits. It is important to integrate their ideas in training the urban planners or designers. Furthermore, these ideas would help to train designer not only to create a new but also to manage an existing.

Although Dewey never used the concept of life-world in his aesthetic experience, the experiencing subject is found in the middle of his practical dealings with the world. His point of departure differs completely from the phenomenology as Dewey finds the interaction between organism and its environment in a way that is mainly in line with the evolutionary theory. In his *Art as Experience*, Dewey opposes the view of aesthetics as philosophy of 'high art', by defining art in terms of the quality of aesthetic experience. Hence it has been claimed that Dewey's art includes for instance nature, most of the objects of daily use, activities of everyday life. Even when Dewey discusses high art, he notes that aesthetic experience is not a phenomenon connected only to the distinct sphere of autonomous art, but always *continuous* with the rest of the life.[5] In addition, as Dewey sees that aesthetic experience is not something marginal in our flow of experiences, but of vital importance. According to Dewey, in this ongoing process of interaction, perceiving and experiencing subject actively 'constitutes' the object of experience. Here, we shall compare Dewey's ideas of active subject with contemporary

[2] Jürgen Habermas, amongst others, opposes the idea of widening the scope of aesthetics outside the realm of art. Habermas's argument is that the origin of the concept of aesthetic is on the modern institution of art (Habermas 1985/1987).

[3] In Husserl's inquiry of the crisis of the natural sciences the pre-scientific life-world was contrasted to the abstract world structured by natural sciences. According to Husserl, natural sciences have gone astray in forgetting their basis in life-world in which the meaning and value of science is after all anchored. (Husserl 1954/1970)

[4] This idea was popularised among the architects by Christian Norberg-Schultz, who developed the notion of Genius-Loci within the field of architectural theory. His attempts to simplify this notion by presenting concrete examples mystified the Heideggerian being and existence. The examples given by Norberg-Schulz for works of architecture in which the Genius-Loci has been enhanced has been more linked with their suitability within the landscape more than their being and existence.

[5] Our interest in this statement is to connect his ideas to cultural continuity, and the continuous evolution of this experience through time.

phenomenological-based hermeneutics and post-structuralism, that also have shifted the focus from artists and works of art to interpretation of works. It should be noted though, that all experience and understanding is not interpretative in the sense that experience would be linguistically structured (Shusterman, 2000). The issue that is considered as important by most philosophers is how to capture the aesthetic experience with words. Urban designers/ planners may sharpen their skills to understand the experiencing of space by the prospective users by following the tools sharpened by the behavioural scientists, who describe such experiences as reactions to certain experiences. Urban design/ planning, being a utilitarian art, could use tools of quite contradictory realms in order to improve its own process.

Dewey(1934/1980) does insist that in addition to the constitutive nature of the subject of experience, the subject is also genuinely receptive. The object of experience is still of importance. He characterises this twofold nature of experience with his terms 'doing' which refers to active side of experiencing, and 'undergoing' that refers to the receptive side of experiencing. 'Doing and undergoing' are precisely the terms that describe the nature of artistic and creative activity in Dewey's theory. He questions the Kantian idea of artist as a *genius,* whose expression is free from cognitive aims as well as practical interests. Since the effort made by the subjects of experience are quite similar to the efforts made by the artist, Dewey can also be seen trying to overcome the dichotomy between artists and the audience. In Dewey's view, a work of art is not complete until it is experienced and therefore creating an object of aesthetic experience is always in a way a collaborative process between artist and audience. In Dewey's theory means and ends are not seen as separable and therefore it is not only the product of art that matters for him but above all the process of collaborative creating and constituting of art.[6] With use of these developments, Arnold Berleant has been able to formulate his normative design-theories of 'participatory' urban environments.[7]

Pragmatist aesthetics is in conflict with the traditional aesthetic thinking that draws from Kantian transcendental philosophy based on its universal subject. The traditional Kantian aesthetics characterises the aesthetic experience as 'disinterested', but the pragmatist aesthetics states that aesthetic experience occurs in the world where our practical interests, cognitive capacities and other things stemming from our own background context of life-world influence the experience.[8] Furthermore, whereas Kant characterises experiencing subject as 'detached', pragmatists emphasise that organism: be it a subject of experience or something else, should always be seen in interaction with its surroundings. Moreover, the traditional Kantian point of view emphasises mental, contemplative and reflective nature of experience. Pragmatist and phenomenological views are trying to overcome the Cartesian mind-body dualism by describing the subject of experience as both bodily and mentally active and responsive. Thus aesthetics, which traditionally has dealt only with distance receptors, seeing and hearing, has to take into the account of the multi-sensory and somatic nature of experience. Here, environmental aesthetics leans especially on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, for whom mental and bodily aspects of experience are continuous parts of undivided experience. Similar emphasis can be found in Dewey's aesthetics as well.

The pragmatist aesthetics perspective questions the Kantian idea of aesthetic as 'purposiveness without purpose', that defines aesthetic experience as an end in itself and does not serve any outer purposes. As pragmatist aesthetics stresses, architecture and urban planning make a case for acknowledging a link between practical and aesthetic (Berleant, 1992 & 1997: Scruton, 1979: Shusterman, 2000). Pragmatists are concerned with the effects that theories have on practice, and proponents of pragmatist aesthetics have held modern aesthetics partly responsible for the vulgar modern architecture and town planning. To conclude, both phenomenological and pragmatist line of aesthetics can quite adequately grasp the actual experience of the world, that is not well structured and divided into categories of aesthetic and other kind of experiences. This line of aesthetics offers some ways to bring the environmental experience in the discussions of planning and design. We find collaborative planning and the communicative turn as the most able ways to integrate this undefined dimension in urban planning.

From Aesthetics of Environment to Aesthetics of Place

A theoretical problem of environmental aesthetics has been the scope of the concept of environment. Whereas objects of art usually have some kinds of boundaries or 'frames', urban environment includes

[6] The Eastern theory of art, that derives a more detailed symbolic language and that is known to be Nir-Mana, or devoid of scale, would thus find contradictions with Dewey's way of discussing art, but we must not forget that his emphasis is on the art-experience rather than art.

[7] Environmental aesthetics is at this point in line with more sociologically oriented view of everyday environments of Michel de Certeau (1984/1988), who notes day-to-day practices through which the environment is constituted and interpreted in such ways that are not always intended by the designers and the planners of the space.

[8] In fact, in spite of the emphasis that is put on the autonomy of aesthetic, in Immanuel Kant's *Critique* aesthetic experience ultimately has a mediating role between cognitive and moral faculties.

everything that surrounds us. In addition, in the most radically anti-dualistic definitions such as Berleant's formulations, environment includes the perceiving subject too. As it seems that there is nothing that is not included in environment, the whole concept of environment becomes null. Our present cultural consciousness that the city is the content as well as the container, and the city becomes an artefact by being a setting, may assist in sorting out the problem of defining the urban environment. The conventional geographical delimiting of the city with use of ramparts or some other such features to be presented as a signified object has worst limits, thus focusing onto the urban spaces that are directly connected with everyday life would be more suitable. The real strength of the space lies in its capacity to accommodate the concept of *place* that has recently been used in the field of phenomenology based on the cultural geography. Heidegger notes, "... 'place' places man in such a way that it reveals the external bonds of his existence and at the same time the depths of his freedom and reality", thus emphasising the need to pay attention to the space and place. Yet, we wish to argue that place-making, as an activity that shows the involvement of people in the space, as more important area to be focused onto.

Place is conceived as the meaningful part of the environment, perceived and understood from the point of view of a perceiver. Place has been defined as 'centre of a life-world' (Relph 1979), and 'centre of felt value' (Tuan 1977). It is rather questionable how much the architects and urban planners are familiar with the concept of place and the activity of place-making, or even rather if they are interested in these concepts. The place that is always in the making and re-making, cannot be captured totally by words too. As such, it contradicts with abstract-geometric space, which has been described as object of detached contemplation (Dowey 1993) or, perhaps somewhat contradictorily, as neutral raw-material for the human purposes (Relph 1979). We know that we specify the space religious space, ceremonial space, etc., and we may even develop norms for the planning of such specific spaces, but we never would be able to standardise the places that are made by those who experience the space. It is true that our spaces do have an impact upon the place-making, but this activity has much more to do with those individuals and societies and their cultural backgrounds. An architect who attempts at introducing a new spatial logic alien to the users, may thus find that the space is not used to its full capacity or his 'creative' spatial logic has been changed according to the desires of the users. The most instructive example would be the city of Chandigar, the ultimate machine-city, through which Le Corbusier sought to build a new fast moving or efficient Indian society. Today, the city has fallen back to the Indian way of life, while the architectural masterpieces scattered in the city centre have been more important to pigeons and visiting architects. The present day Indian urban planners see the need to re-urbanise this city and New Delhi, the ultimate of colonial urban centre.

In cultural geography the concept of place refers in particular to the familiar places and, people's attachments to these places (Relph 1979, Tuan 1974). Today, this idea of familiar place has come to defend urban conservation too. Place as a concept is used in criticisms of the modern architecture and town planning that search for *the* abstract universality and abandon local traditions that are of vital importance for the inhabitants of particular places. It has been claimed that reliance on science and industrial progress have forced the modern architecture and town planning to produce abstract spaces instead of genuine places. As Relph (1979) puts forward it in his Heideggerian analysis of town planning, people do not feel at home at the 'placeless' environments within which they could not rooted themselves. This 'feeling at home' is the dwelling defined by Heidegger, and enabling such dwelling has not been the primary aim of modern urban planning that makes cities 'functional-machines'. Finland, a country full of small and moderate scale cities built during the wave of modernism guided by the celebrated Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, attest to such sterile urban environments, in which even the homogeneous and unexposed Finish culture fails to find any rootedness. East-Pasila, an urban district in Helsinki, is among the most instructive cases for this sterility. Here, the man is displaced from his society and context and put into a high rise filing cabinet, he walks on a raised pedestrian path away from the rest of the world, and vehicles are driven through tunnels to the basements. The views of parks and open spaces may give some concessions to the inhabitants who are only supposed to use the apartments as bunk-beds. As a whole, this urban district with colourful walls and windows shows that the modern urban planner had a wrong concept of aesthetics and had no idea of places and place-making at all.

Places are problematic as objects of aesthetic experience that have traditionally been defined as detached and contemplative and dealt mostly with objects of art which, especially in the case of modern and avant-garde art, represent new and unexpected instead of familiarity. It is unacceptable to exclude the familiar objects, such as homes, dwelling areas from aesthetics. We could argue that environmental aesthetics should be able to deal with them as places with the help of the pragmatist-phenomenological basis. However, we need to relocate ourselves within the current theoretical understanding of environmental aesthetics. In order to discuss this, we shall study examples of planning discussions concerning both planning new residential areas and conservation and renewal of existing environments.

As it appears, the question often is whether certain urban spaces should be perceived as *places* or as *works of art* and consequently, whether they should be argued about in terms of traditional philosophy of art or in terms of 'aesthetics of place'.[9] Difference between these categories seems to be firstly that whereas works of art can be created with an artistic freedom, places cannot be created, but rather altered or changed since they are always already meaningful for people. At the same time, their meanings are in the making of the makers mind. Secondly, works of art seem to be non-violable and self-sufficient, hence we are not allowed to change them. Contrary to this, as pragmatist sees it, we constantly alter our places of dwelling in order to adapt them. Thirdly, we can have personal relations to places, whereas evaluations of works of art are not expected to have anything to do with our personal relations to the object of evaluation. Lastly, for the traditional theories of interpretation, work of art is to be perceived and interpreted appropriately,[10] while places are not necessarily interpreted at all, but perceived against a contingent background-context of life-world. The current problems in urban conservation due to the difficulty of understanding the city as a work of art could be sorted out by focusing onto these theoretical development on the space and place.[11]

The idea of 'ethics of place', to which Relph (1993), refers when he claims that attachment to a place leads to ethical responsiveness towards the place needs to be paid attention too. Ethics of place is not ethics in the sense of traditional universal ethics, but more in line with the feminist ethics of care and of contemporary environmental ethics. In these fields it has been argued that philosophical ethics should be able to deal with our personal relations of care, not only to duties and rights of universal rational subject.[12] The collaborative planning and design promote place-attachment and attachment in turn may further the maintenance of the place in the long run. Therefore the notion of place is in a way connected to sustainable development in the field of planning.

Aesthetics and the Theory of Urban Planning and Design

The planning theory is usually seen as referring to both theories in planning, that deal with objects of planning, and theories of planning, which deal with the processes of planning. Contemporary planning thoughts has emphasised mostly on the procedural theories of planning, whereas theories of architecture and urban design have remained on substantial side of planning. The view points of planning as 'future-control' or as a 'mode of decision making', has widened the scope to include everything has worst impact when planning becomes nothing. As we know, the planned decisions often have unplanned consequences, and the basis upon which those decisions were made or the processes that were used to formulate those basis are to blame. The planning theories such as structure planning, systems approach, and advocacy planning developed within the concept of comprehensive planning need to be discussed here to bring in the new concept of collaborative planning. The technique, in addition to survey and analysis, is considered important for the structure planning. Goal definition and evaluation are among the other key terms used there. This activity and land-use oriented concept has two levels as policy level and technical level. As a whole, structure planning is more concerned with the implementation and decision making factors. In advocacy planning, the planner's role is that of an advocate for certain causes, pleading for particular needs of many interest groups, building up a case for their implementation (Ledvinkova, & schmeidler 2001). This theory has the strengths in determination of the goals and evaluation of the alternatives. The most common feature of these is their intentions to put forward a set of alternatives and assess them scientifically and quantitatively, thus largely ignoring the desires of the living community.

Due to the procedural bias of these contemporary planning thoughts, aesthetic considerations are not central. If we think of it from the pragmatist perspective from where processes and products of creation do not appear as separate issues. As aetheticising of urban space is a strategy in development of urban spaces in our times (Welsch, 1997), and as design and architecture remain as important aspects of planning, the theory of aesthetics should have a role in planning theory. Lack of an aesthetic point of view may in particular be a shortcoming of communicative planning theory, for questions concerning aesthetic value of the urban environment are of great importance for people participating in planning practices.

In the theory of modern town planning, aesthetics is usually linked to the theory of *physical planning and design* where town planning was considered as an extension of architecture, the town as a big house

[9] Our concern is not if they are works of art or not. We rely on a Dantoan conception of "art world" (see Danto 1981), which defines in the field of urban planning which of the objects of planning are of artistic value and which are not.

[10] This concerns the aesthetic discussion about natural environments too, since it is sometimes claimed that in order to be able to aesthetically appreciate natural environments, one should have appropriate scientific knowledge of them (see Carlson 2000).

[11] Our idea has been to propose that urban conservation be redefined as conservation in urban space, and primary objective of this conservation as enabling place-making.

[12] This question concerns e.g. the validity of the so-called not-in-my-backyard arguments in the field of planning.

(Taylor 1998). Each dwelling, instead of becoming a room of the big house, has become an individual unit of its own. The inhabitants never became members of a family but unknown individuals. As such, the modern city lost the unity, and the postmodernism distracted it further. Physical planning stress the role of architects as artists to whom considerable artistic freedom is given. In some schools of architecture, for example the Helsinki University of Technology in Finland, chairs have been created for Artistic Urban Planning, and often these chairs are held by professional architects rather than academics. As the critiques of modern town planning suggest, in physical planning artistic creation often started from a clean slate and not much attention was paid to the wishes of the inhabitants or to old city structures. The sense of place was lacking from the paradigm of modern town planning, that in some sense continued the domination of colonial city planning. The other significant problem for physical planning was that the detailed 'blueprint' plans were not flexible and could not adapt to the changing needs of people.

According to Nigel Taylor and many others, aesthetic considerations disappeared from planning thought in the 1960's when physical planning was replaced by two separate lines of planning thought that were the systems theoretical view and the view of planning as a rational decision-making process. It should be noted that this may have been above all a theoretical change of paradigm, whereas in practice, certain features of physical planning could be still seen as apparent in town planning in the Finnish context. The idea of systems theory was to conceive the city as a system or as a process. Plans thus became more flexible, but at the same time the artistic dimension was left out. The systems view of planning with quantitative methods is usually referred to as rather anti-aesthetic, but the line of environmental aesthetics proposed here could, in principle be applied to systems view of the city. As such, pragmatist-phenomenological 'aesthetics of place' is not dealing only with cities considered as static works of art, or picture-like townscapes, but with people and their interaction with their environments, their social activities, and with the processes of urban nature as well.[13]

While physical planning has mostly been interested in the *substantive* side of planning, the city itself, the rational decision-making has concentrated solely on the idea that *planning is a process* of decision-making. Most unfortunately, the planners have kept on ignoring the fact that their planned decision are to often cater for unplanned consequences. The problem might also be caused by the too-scientific nature of this decision-making procedure. This decision-making process is the bias that dominates the theory of communicative planning, but this theory having intertwined the interpretative and normative aspects, has the potential to relate these decisions to the localities. Even though the main concern here is on the side of experience of the urban environment, the rational decision-making view brings the problem of creative process of planner as well since it is well known that these kind of processes are difficult to describe with words to the forefront (Lang 1987). As Deweyan pragmatism has been made much use of in criticisms of rational means-ends model in planning,[14] we intend to return in this point to pragmatist, and more contemporary views concerning of aesthetic creation.

Theory of Collaborative Planning

The theoretical discussion on aims and objectives of planning raises the issue of value-laden nature of planning already a several decades ago. This has led to the current *communicative turn* in planning theory (Healey, 1997). "Communicative planning theory is essentially a theory of planning practice. It describes, interpretes and explains what planners do. It has a string normative concern as well. It explains what ethically critical planning practice should be", observes Khalee (1998).. Theory of communicative planning draws from the theory of communicative action of Jürgen Habermas, but it has been unclear, how far planning theory has followed the philosopher (Forester, 1989 &1993: Healey, 1997: Sager, 1994/1996). Habermas maintains that a rational discussion of values is possible because rationality cannot only refer to instrumental rationality. As most theories of modern rationality conceive it, but it must refer to communicative rationality. The idea of communicative rationality is based on the presupposition that the basic function of language is the search for mutual understanding. In Habermas's theory Cartesian *cogito* is replaced by situated subject that is constituted in the processes of communication.

Habermas defends 'life-world' related to communicative rationality against the 'system' related to instrumental rationality and threatens to 'colonise' the life-world. Habermas sees this conflict interestingly in modern urban planning, where the media of power and money steer planning to the directions that are not beneficial from the perspective of life-worlds (Habermas 1989b:128). Habermasian life-world is a world taken for granted, and also a world of a particular tradition, but in a way, that any part of the tradition can always be re-evaluated in rational discussion. Of course it should be noted that Habermasian conception of linguistically structured

[13] The current thirst for visiting historic towns that are maintained with their picture postcard views is a result of the sterility created by this physical planning.

[14] Referring to the incrementalism based on "ameliorism" is closely related to Dewey's pragmatism.

life-world completely differs from phenomenological notions of life-world: for example Merleau-Ponty's 'life-world' in particular, in which bodily and pre-linguistic experience is of central importance for the constitution of subject. One may concern potentials of Habermasian theory of life-world to take into account, for instance our experience of space and place. Another may concern the overall effects of this kind of theory and in particular the destiny of the fields of life, that are not easily brought under discussion in aesthetics, especially when it is more concerned with experience than judgements of taste.

Habermas maintains that the value spheres of science, morality and art are inescapably differentiating in modern society and their increasing rationalisation is governed only by validity claims, correspondingly in each sphere, to truth, rightness and authenticity. Habermas uses the term *discourse* to describe the communication that makes these validity claims thematic and rises above everyday practice so that only mutual understanding, consensus, is in the interests of speakers. The idea of discourse, however, is connected only to the cognitive and moral-practical spheres. In aesthetic sphere, that is always tied to a certain culture and a certain form of life, validity cannot be universal but still, as Habermas conceives it, there remains a possibility of rational argumentation. One of the problems concerning applicability of the theory of Habermas concerns the notion of an ideal speech situation that is a constitutive norm of discourse refers to the fictional situation of the non-distorted communication. It is a counterfactual norm without any utopian content according to him, thus its role in planning theory is questionable (Forester, 1993). The problem does not only concern the applicability of the theory. In an ideal speech situation participants are supposed to withdraw from their personal relations to the world, whereas the particular relations in phenomenological-based thinking are often seen as essential part of human being in the world. At this point of Habermas's theory, the particularity of subject is swept off by universality and ideality. Such being the case, his theory has often encountered critique.

What is definitely central to planning theory in Habermas's thought is the problem of differentiating cultural spheres that are becoming increasingly rational and dominated by experts. Habermas wishes to connect these distinct spheres to life-world to 'complete the project of modernity'. According to him, this cannot be done by giving up the autonomy of one of the spheres, because that would deteriorate the progress in that sphere. As Habermas sees it, the most striking examples of this kind of 'false sublation' of culture are to be found in the field of aesthetics. Habermas has, for instance, strongly opposed the attempts of post-modern architecture to advocate collaborative design practices that threaten the autonomy, and thus the progress of art. Instead he still insists, as is known, on building in modern terms. In Habermas's view, problems of modern architecture and town planning are not due to cultural modernisation but to societal modernisation, from which the solutions to these problems should be found. (Habermas, 1989a.) Here we propose to treat Habermas more as a proponent of the elitist conception of architecture and art than as a fore-speaker of collaborative practices in these fields.

Aestheticians are interested in the role of aesthetics in Habermas's theory, albeit aesthetics generally is not the central concern in his theory. In spite of his elitist conception of art and aesthetics, Habermas repeatedly reminds that art and aesthetic experience plays a vital role in modern society in enriching life-worlds. But it is most unclear, how this could actually happen. Although Habermas holds onto the idea of autonomous sphere of aesthetics, he also acknowledges that in the aesthetic experience, three value spheres are eventually intertwined. Most of the commentators of Habermas have suggested that aesthetic experience ultimately has got a mediating role between the three cultural spheres: a solution that would ultimately align with Kantian aesthetics. Yet, in some of his remarks on aesthetics, Habermas could be seen conceiving aesthetics in nearly post-modern way as a realm of pre-discoursive, of 'the other of reason'; of bodily experience (Coole, 1996). Habermas himself constantly accuses post-modernists of this kind of conception of aesthetics, that, according to him, have replaced reason and its emancipatory potentials altogether. However, if this readings of his aesthetics were correct, Habermas's aesthetics may indeed offer important frameworks for planning, especially in grasping environmental experiences in their richness, and the plurality of perspectives and alternatives.

The City of Multiple Voices

Coming back to the substantive aspect of planning, we would find that it processes of decision-making and communication are of equal importance to aesthetics by partly creating the background for perceiving and appreciating the environment. We may find the good city form by searching something like consensus, or by allowing multiple voices to concretise in urban environment. This issue is to be approached from more sociological point of view, for example by turning to Bourdieu's reading of Kantian aesthetics. Bourdieu proposes that we give up the idea of Kantian *sensus communis* and the universal subject of aesthetic experience in favour of different taste cultures that are also related to certain social hierarchies. This also implies that the 'outer purposes' of aesthetic field should be critically examined. Bourdieu's account, however, points to the possibility that opening up of elitist and professional taste cultures may not be so easy, since

aesthetic taste can also be used in gaining or maintaining a certain position in society. For example, in Finnish town planning, it has been claimed that artistic taste ultimately has cleared a way for architects to exclude the other groups from the field of urban planning (Salokannel, 1993).[15] Yet, they being the products of modernism and the country having been rebuilt after the WW II, the urban planning has been dominated by the traffic and other services. Today's needs to aestheticising urban space, including the high ways, has become a refugee in the copying of South European urban elements. The urban squares of modest size that are built everywhere in the city would sooner or later will become more like the Piazza de Italia by Charles Moore, repeated elements failing to enable a life style.

Diversity of taste culture is also approached in our study, thus examining the development of the institution of modern, autonomous art and especially the positions of architecture and town planning within it. The rise of autonomous and elitist high art that has alienated itself from everyday life, has at the same time furthered its counter-phenomenon: different forms of mass culture celebrated in modernity and post-modernity (Huyssen, 1986). This kind of division into elitist and popular taste cultures has not been equally tenable solution for all forms of art. Roger Scruton (1979), amongst others, sees the crisis of modern architecture in the fact that architecture as public form of art has not been able to acquire an expert audience, since we all belong more or less to the same big audience and seldom have a choice of whether we want to experience buildings in public urban spaces or not. In addition, during the modernity and post-modernity, the architects have become the sole authority of their so-called masterpieces, that pay no attention to the physical, social and cultural contexts. Their intentions of establishing a personnel style, and their followers aiming to continue that in order to be someone like that celebrated figure have completely ignored the society.[16] The modern Finnish architects have betrayed their audience to the extent of calling their glass-steel boxes Nokia architecture, named after the telecommunication concern that pulled out the country from its recent economic depression. The architects, falling into the pockets of their pay masters, seem to be entertaining their clients more than the world's oldest profession. In the realms of other forms of art we can make a choice that kind of art is required to experience and appreciate. The fact that in spite of our differences we have to share the same space may still make a case for searching some kind of 'modernist' consensus in a shared place, that can only have one physical form at one time. Our historic cities witness to the otherwise.

However, since planning theory does not have much to say about the problem of how to have the multiple voices of planning and design discussions concretised in built environment, it is necessary to examine the ideas presented by the post-modern theorists though their ideas fall short in many ways. Among the most notable problems of the post-modern theory of architecture is the most famous slogan of 'double coding' of built environment promoted by Charles Jencks (1977 & 1984). He wished to replace modern uniformity of built environment by post-modern diversity, complexity, and richness. By double coding, according to Jencks, it would be possible to combine the popular codes and professional codes in one building. From a perspective of aesthetics, his view of creating architecture and urban design as coding and experiencing them as decoding seems quite flawed. Even if experiencing was reduced to some kind of decoding, it would be problematic for an architect to predict the meanings that buildings will have when experienced against certain particular contexts (Kolb, 1990).[17] It could be noted that post-modern architecture has not appreciated the experiencing in the everyday environments and it is not appreciated by many. As a whole, it seems to have well suited the Las Vegas type of atmosphere, in which one lives in soap bubble dreams. On the other hand, celebrating the everyday life could also be seen as an affirmative gesture whereas everyday life in fact would often need radical revisions.

Architecture and planning, in the light of aesthetic theories of popular art (Carroll, 1998: Shusterman, 2000), becoming 'popular architecture' and 'popular planning'.[18] The concepts may refer to certain already existing environments, such as dwelling areas with factory made family houses that are based on the popular European system called do-it-yourself. In Finland, such packages are delivered and assembled within two weeks. With the advancement of the Computer Aided Architectural Design, the clients are able to request some limited

[15] In Finland, there are no specialised educational programmes for planners. All the planners have been first trained as architects, but may have majored in urban planning or have worked with planners. There are also geographers, who have majored either in Applied Geography or Geography for Planning. They, however, remains more in the background while the Architect-planners are involved with urban planning.

[16] The recent issues of the *Sri Lanka Architect Journal* attest to following the footpaths of a master and his language. Most unfortunately, the works of the younger generation can easily be considered not as architecture but as Bawa-tecture.

[17] As we know, the architects often are not interested in such possible decoding, but they intend to enforce a certain form decoding through their buildings. As professionals we shall believe in passing a message, but whether we have a right or ability to transform a society through planning or designing is doubtful.

[18] The concept of popular planning is already used e.g. by Nigel Taylor (1998).

changes too. Therefore, without undermining the role of 'high' architecture, these popular environments would gain an aesthetic quality, both from the point of view of professionals and non-professionals, if they were not excluded from the field of professional discussion.

However, aesthetics should not only be concerned with the physical form of built environment. Consequently, we need to examine an urban diversity as a social and cultural diversity. Urban space, indoor as well as outdoor, should be designed according to the social and cultural evolution patterns. The physical context has to play a less-important role. Our research aim has been to investigate the potentials of interpreting a type an aesthetic in this social and cultural diversity. In fact, one of the predecessors of the post-modern movement in architecture and urban planning, Jane Jacobs (1962) was predominantly a fore-speaker of social and cultural diversity in the urban space. Most of us have yet failed to identify the indoor spaces as urban spaces, and the relationship between indoor space and outdoor space. Perceiving difference and diversity in urban environment has both an aesthetic and ethical dimension. The possibility of enhancing aesthetic experience that pragmatist aesthetics tries to bring about, could also lead to the ethical awareness and responsiveness of the perceiver. Thus the aesthetic would not have to be understood as being celebrated at the expense of the ethical, as it is often understood in the theories of post-modern culture (Harvey, 1980 / 1990). The question concerning recognition of difference and concrete *otherness* is without no doubt of importance also from the point of view of acting together and making decisions together in shared spaces. This sharing and tolerance are the key terms that were supposed to be making the city beautiful.

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