



Aesthetics of Architecture



Erasmus+

5. Architecture and the social: How in architecture we can distinguish the manifestation of social aspect from manifestation of individual, personal moment

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5.1. Introductory remarks

Architecture is primarily a social phenomenon because people in most cases live in a living environment created by others. Thus, the assessment of the aesthetic qualities of architecture is important not only in the way how certain individual citizen evaluates architecture, but also how it is evaluated by collective. It is related with the matter of a more adequate public participation in the process of project solutions discussing.

The final result of discussion cannot be a mechanical sum of individual opinions. An informational environment for managing environmental issues should be developed that would allow to represent a wide range of opinions and, at the same time, would be the ground for finding of culturally and ecologically motivated, categories common for all agents involved into nurturing of cultural environment.

5.2. Collective and/or individual values

The fact that we still often cannot see the environment as something alive (also grasp the *genius loci*) is due to the relic of classical worldview – objectivistic treatment of environment, and understanding other subjectivities only as object of action, of manipulation.

We will not notice the subjectivity of a place if we look at it through the lens of individual psychology categories. When people get educated, they are usually looking at the world with empathy on the base of collective psychology that let them see other personalities – subjectivities, and grasp the essence of cultural processes.

As George Dickie explains, aesthetics in the twentieth century, with regard to its central problems, fall into three relatively distinct periods: the psychological, the analytic and the contextual.

5.2. Collective and/or individual values

According to Dickie, until the 1950s, philosophers attempted to resolve the central questions of aesthetics – the nature of the experience of art and the nature of art – by using notions of individual psychology, notions of what people do or undergo as individuals.

These notions of individual psychology contrast with social notions of what people do or undergo as members of groups. From the early 1960s, a number of philosophers have attempted to resolve the central problems of aesthetics with contextual theories.

Arthur Danto explains, that the new thing for the twentieth-century aesthetics was the idea that context involves cultural concepts, not the notions of individual psychology.

5.2. Collective and/or individual values

We treat here cultural concepts as synonyms of term cultural connotations. The ability to comprehend something hidden in the environment still is blocked by the principle of spatiality.

We will demonstrate a good example based on a work of collective psychology. We are talking about cultural concepts, that are rooted in categories if collective psychology.

Units of proposed genius loci code functions as substitutes of regularities have practical implications – they are consensus units that allow one subjectivity related with actual with the management of historical environment of city and another subjectivity to understand each other.

5.2. Collective and/or individual values

Such informational units can help recognize related with them invariant structures relatively constant in time (M. Mamardashvili gives a good example, analogue, of substitution of regularities: monetary units as invariant structures representing the price of goods for all participants in the process of goods exchange).

It is a good example based on a work of collective psychology.

The mentioned shifters – consensual units, have a certain two-sided nature. We can treat them as some kind of “centaurs”, where the physical side (visible objects, places) or elementary denotative semantic features are accepted at once, but for comprehension of deeper metaphysical side (cultural meanings) some special competency is necessary and can be acquired in the educational process.

5.2. Collective and/or individual values

As long as the invariant symptoms (“centaurs”) are not perceived implicitly, i. e. they are still not learned, it is necessary to use mediating tools – semantic manuals and related with them legal documents, which regulate territory development and contain cultural meanings associated with the certain places.

It is best to arrange such descriptions of dialogue conditions to a greater degree close to the denotative characterisation using cultural connotations.

Humberto Maturana emphasizes that in the language the perceptual shift, orientation of perception, is organized namely by connotative semantic units.

The denotation and connotation characteristics must be combined in the knowledge presented in an explicit form.

5.2. Collective and/or individual values

Delivering knowledge in an accessible form to all interested parties can guarantee the availability of information on the conditions for the implementation of public interest.

A code element (consensual units) consists of 1) names of identified easy recognizable objects forming a place; and 2) cultural ideas, connotational characteristics of those objects.

Some ideas appear as simple cultural connotations of certain objects and are easily identifiable. However, fuller knowledge of local cultural-symbolic potential requires use of data that has a more complex connotational structure.

5.2. Collective and/or individual values

Such ideas encourage designers to comprehend the distinctive features of the place more deeply; also they are helping them to take into account personal existential experiences that are essential for stimulation of original creative design solutions.

The ability to see in the city environment various, even the most complex, contextual meanings is developed and deepend in collaboration with thesaurus (model of locus identity), which not only presents peculiarities of place but at the same time is “explaining” the “intentions” of the locality.

References

Petrušonis V. *Conditions for a Dialogue of Local Community and Genius Loci*, 2018 [Forthcoming]

5.3. Regarding public participation

What do we usually see during a public meeting where project solutions should be discussed?

There are several elderly people with a doubtful competency, who can only express their own private opinion, but cannot express a social stand at the public meeting.

A private superficial opinion is rooted in individual's psychology without references to broader social-cultural context. Actually members of such meeting are not participants of real dialogue with other interested stakeholders (including genius loci).

At the moment excessive attention to superficial public participation is blocking both researches on urban environmental issues and of education of specialists, as well as upbringing of public.

5.3. Regarding public participation

If the cultural-ecological competency of the participants, members of local community, is not enough to perceive the invariant features of the environment, their participation in environmental management process may be destructive to that environment.

Such kind of genius loci representation means (combining denotative and connotative semantics) as system of ecologically motivated symptoms would be the best measure to create the consensus between architects and community members from one side and genius loci from the other side.

Explicitly presented set of consensual units, representing genius loci “interests” has to be presented to the participants of public discussion regarding the future of certain locality.

5.3. Regarding public participation

References

Petrušonis V. *Conditions for a Dialogue of Local Community and Genius Loci*, 2018 [Forthcoming]

5.4. Problems related with relic of classical rationalism - spatiality principle

The principle of spatiality inherent in classical rationalism requires complete articulation of the matter outwards (available for external observation) as the condition of the things that could be generally known about the matter; as if the act of phenomena observation does not change the essence.

In the mentality of architects, the manifestation of the spatiality principle is testified by the following: 1) in urban design, context is often understood as the closest buildings 2) when physical attributes of the building are considered the most valuable qualities of the cultural heritage object 3) when it is said 'why the comparative analysis of landscape is required if everything in well seen on the map' 4) when discussion of the value, benefit, possible functions of objects considers no cultural context of the functioning of the object.

5.4. Problems related with relic of classical rationalism - spatiality principle

This is the latter issue wherein the important role is played by cultural connotations displaying the social cultural memory of the social community and appearing on the plane of collective psychology.

Texts regulating the activity and containing sufficient connotative possibilities stimulate an abductive solution grounded on integration of the existential experience of researcher or architect.

The New Testament may be referred to as the example wherein Christ bringing his teaching operates the generally comprehensible comparisons (presenting certain connotations), i.e. metaphors what are the certain kind of helpfull „understanding tools“.

5.4. Problems related with relic of classical rationalism - spatiality principle

References

Petrušonis V. Nauja kultūros paveldo objektų aprašo koncepcija = A New Concept of Cultural Heritage Description. In: *Paveldo brydės = The Heritage Traces*. Vilnius: Savastis, 2017, p. 9-28.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

Here I will explain the specificities of comprehension of locus cultural identity disclosed in works of the author during the period 1981 - 2006, and to demonstrate the resemblance of the main concepts of the proposed theory of the revealing and respectation of locus cultural identity with the theory of the perceiving subject that has been offered by Gilles Deleuze, paying the most attention to his concept of *image-movement*.

In this context, the concept of image-movement offered by Gilles Deleuze suggesting the reality observation perspective located in meta-time is of great importance also for the understanding of the locus identity phenomenon. The concept of becoming both in the model of locus cultural identity and in the conception of Deleuze is related to an unindividualized memory and is free of psychologization.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

The sense of the locus cultural identity displays its cognitive character and hence is not related solely with the visually perceived tangible facts; the Deleuzean movement-image theory demonstrates that the very act of perception is not perceived by the subject and that movement-image is not fixed in its totality as a separate unit: it may be recognized only in a series of perceptions; the comprehension of locus identity may be analogous a series of historical synchronical cuts figure as bearers of primary semantic features having narrow local meaning and only together in general presenting the sense of locus identity.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

The sphere of becoming of locus cultural identity is represented by a set of specific units of an identity notification system identity interpreters extracted from process analysis.

Interpreters are functioning as the codes presenting the grammatical matrix of the process.

The locality can be understood as a specific sign interpreted by these interpreters that figure as shifters switching the perception in the frame of a specific configurating system.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

In such a configurating system identity interpreters operate on a hypersemantic level: the set of expressed meanings that stimulate the understanding (i.e. guessing) of the hidden meaning that is not expressed directly; identity interpreters shifters that have no individual meaning or referential power allow the receiver to concentrate on the whole; that can be compared with the Delezean non-private level of comprehension (where social and semantic issues plays the main role).

Locality as the organism-field (or as certain subjectivity) that demonstrates to the designer its position and (or) interests in different actual socio-cultural contexts can be compared with the Deleuzean specific subject of perception operating with non-private memory.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

In the Deleuzean theory of perception, the perceiving subject is never viewed as 'I' (i.e. the psychological subject) but rather as a *we*, the *masses*.

As the perceiving subject the latter is not understood in the context of subjectivity based on the Decartian *cogito* principle in which the concepts of 'I' and 'subject' were equivalent or, in other words, when activity and capability for creating images become an inseparable characteristics of the subject.

Through the way of the depsychologization of philosophy that took place in 20-th century was closely related with the tradition of phenomenology, yet, in it the recognition of the new type of perceiving subject is problematic since it is oriented towards the deep-rootedness of the subject in the world and primeval perceptive experience.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

In the discussed context, Deleuze develops the ideas of Henri Bergson, who enters into polemics with the Kantian understanding of time as an *inner feeling*. For Bergson, time is never viewed as an *inner feeling*. Contrariwise, it is understood as something *external*. For Deleuze, perceiving subject and the realizing subject (i.e. performing reflexive acts) are entirely different subjects.

An important step was made by Heidegger when in the Dasein structure he found the *being-with* of *private* and *non-private* existence. By criticizing Husserl's theory of phenomenology Heidegger claims that his seeking of preciseness of phenomenological reduction does not consider such unreducable remnant in which non-private being, or in other words, *being-with-the-other*, is hidden.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

The *other*, or to be more precise, the *others* that take out from the 'I' the possibility to the fully appropriate perception in the act of reflexion, i.e. it may be the *we* or the very *everyday existence*. For Heidegger, the everyday existence figures as a specific concept of *time* which is nonreflexive.

In Bergson perspective, the image is directly related with the matter and the time is related with memory. *Image-recollection* is introduced as a dynamic element that connects two poles equally unattainable in their determination, i.e. *pure recollection* and *perception*.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

Perception is an actualized recollection. However it is always non-private. From this it follows that *my* memory and *my* perception do not belong to *me*. It comes out that *non-private* recollection is something that is assimilated by *me* at the moment of actualization.

However, it exists solely on a *virtual* level, i.e. the thing that cannot be recalled from the individual past and therefore does not belong to the 'I' but rather to the 'we', to the community which points to another type of perceiving subject.

Deleuz relates his ideas with the semiotics of Charles Peirce that is oriented towards the relationship between signs and is distinguished by its dynamism not found in Ferdinand de Saussure's theory.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

Namely such relationship allows for the operation of *movement-image* in which the signs do not belong to language matter but are produced by *time-image*.

Actually, *movement-image* is not consolidated in any familiar expressions. It is a purely dynamic relationship where the sign by passing from one interpretative system into another becomes not equivalent to itself.

Time-image opens itself up to the perceiver in the *meta-time*, i.e. in the time in which the object may be perceived as an undivided whole in whose formation the role of chronology is rather insignificant.

Such is the actual (i.e. readable) sublayer; all the rest is virtual images of the past that, in fact, always belonged to others. Such virtual images do fold affectiveness

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

In Deleuzean treatment, such an image that opens before the perceiver in the *meta-time* is distinguished by potency for the absence of visibility, of operation as structural element and for the rebirth in the shape of a consolidated block of senses.

Hence it may be possible to compare the central concepts extended in my papers and the ones found in Deleuze theory.

In the given model of locus' cultural identity *becoming* is related with an unindividualized, free of psychologization memory (in the conception of Deleuze, *becoming* is treated analogically).

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

Here the *identity interpreter* (as a concept close to Yuri Lotman's "cultural concept") or the *core attribute* (in this context, it might be useful to add phenomenologically advanced concepts of the "body of comprehension" or "organ of comprehension" offered by Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, and, in the author's mind, having a synonymous meaning) of the locality as *sign* is similar to the Deleuzean term *percept*.

In the discussed model locality as *organism-field* of subject based nature demonstrate to the designer (i.e. architect, planner of the city, or government elite) its position (i.e. the complex of interests) that guarantees the preservation of the identity of such subjectivity and thus affect the practical solutions.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

In the case of Deleuze, the specific subject of perception that by operating with the non-private memory that was formed on the basis of non-private being has an impact on the consciousness of individual subject by means that on the level of the consciousness of individual subjects cannot be perceived.

They may be perceived exclusively as a block that is framing the series in. Thus, finally, the model offers the world of the locality's identity which has a parallel in Deleuzean theory where he offers the concept of the *plan of immanency*.

5.5. Cultural identity of locus as non-private issue

References

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