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ARCHITECT A SOCIAL REFORMER?

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ABSTRACT

Architects' Perception of space is loaded with multiple living layers that are articulated as bits and pieces of a variety of events that might have taken place over a range of time periods. The recollections are assembled in an imaginative plane in the form of a collage done in a virtual space grid. The perceptive layers expressed in tangible media are very intricate in nature. The nature of the complexity of these realistic, experiential, associational, hyper-realistic, and idealistic layers is jumbled up in the form of perceived augmented reality. The article is an inquiry to identify some of the potential layers that bang or should preferably resonate with the designers' thought process. The basic motivation for the article is a study of theoretical discourses carried out by architects, and academic and design theorists. The method adapted for the study is to load a neutral space grid with two kinds of perceived scenarios; One scenario is rendered by doing a collage of selective social happenings on different planes in real time reproduced on the same plane in a hyper-realistic space grid, while the second scenario is created by loading the same space grid with a wholistic space configuration taking place within an existing overcrowded street. The comparative analysis is carried out to highlight the gap between 'imagined space' and 'adapted space'. The article's objective is to engage designers in a conceptual dialogue – an inner speech to come up with more sensible and aware responses while taking design decisions. For this purpose, certain space settings are created for architects to critically expand their design horizons and their understanding of design issues to reimagine space configurations offered by the existing set of realities.

Keywords: Space Perception, Space Grid, Cultural adaptation

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INTRODUCTION

A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (Karl, 1867). The world is an idea of Demiurge the perfect architect (Taylor, 1928). Architect, therefore, is the originator of 'pallet' and "canvas" i.e., 'time' and "space" – a prospective series of happenings wherein we temporal architects are provided with opportunities to venture our creative abilities in the attainment of a better performing stage for better individuals and healthier society. The stage of time and space represents and ideally, facilitates social and environmental intricacies. The space envelopes we design or deem to design are but to administer human behavior, comfort, and technological trends.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To contextualize the concept and better understand the relationship between the architect and its social involvement, the historical view evolution and a brief job description profile should be studied. The idea behind architects' social roles and obligations is that they have an impact on society, have the power to improve the world, and even have a crucial impact on how civilized space is and how livable a community is (Salama, 2011). They take an active interest in a variety of political, social, cultural, and environmental issues and use their writing, designs, plans, and utopias to successfully combat them. Fundamentally, this was a response to accelerated industrialization, standardization, urbanization, and serial production (Curtis, 1994).

Architects and the architectural profession are occasionally confronted with a variety of concerns since the 1980s. The notions of one's image and the image of society, as well as one's own identity and sense of others, are among the most salient. These challenges are not being addressed adequately. The perception of low values for architects, their profession, and their education has benefited from the weak responses. For some architects, the practice of architecture is fundamentally a process of self-discovery. The starchitects are hard at work manifesting who they are. Based on the individual's beliefs rather than on social or human needs, buildings are used as a conduit for artistic expression (Cuff, 1989).

For a very long time, architects have been seeking fame and acclaim. They strive to be social and intellectually equal to their elite clientele. They continue to believe that they are entitled to use the act of designing a building for their exploration and expression, even though most other people use these buildings (Salingaros, 2007). They are more focused on developing architecture, hardly using anything other than their innate talents. While simultaneously enabling some architects to create a few brilliant examples, this artistic title has produced and continues to produce fragmented and unintelligible urbanism. People instinctively perceive contemporary architecture and urbanism as disconnected from and antagonistic to traditional human values that they hold dear (Salingaros, 2006).

Rather than long-term values, the practice of architecture is more likely to be influenced by immediate costs. But it's more of an all-encompassing activity. If we divide it up into small cost chunks,

it will go against its very nature if we don't take great care (Wigglesworth, 2005; Van Toorn, 2003). If architects want to be heard, they must acknowledge the proof of the precise value of architecture. Architects needed to work more carefully, be more critical, and take charge of the statistics of value if they wanted to see the profession of architecture flourish (Samuel, 2018).

In this age of complexity regarding the availability of data, methods, variables, and its selection, and weighing various variables, it is necessary to prioritize questions of human well-being and its relationship to the built environment, according to Brandon & Lombardi (2009) narrative. By conducting thorough research on this subject, we can delicately overcome this challenge and inform policymakers and civil society alike about the impact of the built environment on social lives. This evolutionary formula requires the involvement of architects. In any given context, there is a pressing need to bridge the gap between financial models, societal perceptions, and architectural practices (Brandon, 2009).

The creative industries include a modest but important portion of architecture (DCMS, 1998; Müller, 2009). Our environments are strongly affected by architectural designs, which also have an impact on our well-being and our capacity to function in urban environments (Piatkowska, 2016). Due to their greater professional obligations, they undergo training for a significantly longer period than other players in the field. It is important to comprehend their role in the spatialization of change (Davies, 2013). Their "artifacts of knowing" are a symbol of change in and of themselves, evoking reactions in everyone who interacts with them. Architecture has evolved into an icon, a performative entity for the legality of new authority or new social relations, whether real or found growing. Architects can develop novel ideas, including signs, symbols, procedures, and physical structures, which can help the populace get ready for the change.

Architect training is important because architects must coordinate everything from technical to social to economic to environmental issues (De Schiller, 1996). If architects are unaware of the issue of social responsibility, it will be assumed that they are not performing their duties properly (Lu, 2009). They needed to align their efforts with the aspirations of the community and the public (Jann, 2010). To perform their job, the future architect must be fully aware of their social responsibilities.

While designing any space, architects play a critical role in integrating various characteristics of spaces. Spaces are a social construct that depend on the comprehension and interpretation of interactions between people and their environments and are based on cultural bonds (Ali, 2021). The spaces can be either public or private. Individual and collective can be translated into spatial terms as public and private (Hertzberger, 2005). The term "public" refers to a space that is open to all and whose upkeep is the collective responsibility. The term "private" refers to a space that only a small group or an individual has access to, and its upkeep is the responsibility of that person or limited users.

Any space's function, or "Use," is just as crucial as the space itself. The term "use" refers to the open exchange of activities. It includes a wide range of functions, not just how people and organizations live and work in space, but also what they do to and with it (Logan, 2007). Spatial determinists assert that the social influences of spaces are inevitable. The nature of these effects is fundamentally use-

specific and indirect; they are not automatic (Gans, 2002). Use is essentially everything that humans who have been placed in space do. Different users are socially impacted by a specific space in different ways. They cannot be identical. Studies of the functions and outcomes of social spaces provide yet another framework for almost every subject that sociologists investigate.

Role of Architect

"In my generation, the idea was you'd build for the future, there was this very strong feeling that the state could be enriched by the way we played out our abilities. This has gone. It's much more an age of greed, it doesn't matter what you earn, you have no duty to society." About "Ethos," said Rogers, "The idea is that we have a responsibility to society. That gives us a role as architects not just to the client but also to the passer-by and society as a whole. I wouldn't say that things are uglier, but we need to be wary of protecting the public domain" (Richard Rogers Interview, 2013).

Architects with global exposure and an intelligent stance sensibly redirect local architectural trends, which constructively transform indigenous lives. On the other hand architects with distant and pictorial exposure to trend-making and technologically advanced, well-documented architectural precedents, reflexively imitate out of pure innocence something very superficial, unwanted, and least sensitive towards society and the environment. This approach towards built fabric is more evident and that’s probably why we have more daring facades and less considerate architectural substances.

Making the Case

Fig 01. Design response to *'Personal Space'*; a studio project assigned to students of 2nd year Architecture at the Department of Architecture COMSATS University Islamabad, Islamabad Campus. Fall 2021. The architecture challenge in this academic project for elementary level of architecture undergrad students was to design a dream space according to the needs and lifestyle that they have or would opt to have, in a dream context. The intent was to engage students in an exploration process so that they can work with maximum freedom to generate imaginative design possibilities. Given design response is an interesting spatial composition, in terms of programmatic unpredictability and livability of spaces.

Model by Aatirah Aamir FA20-BAR-037

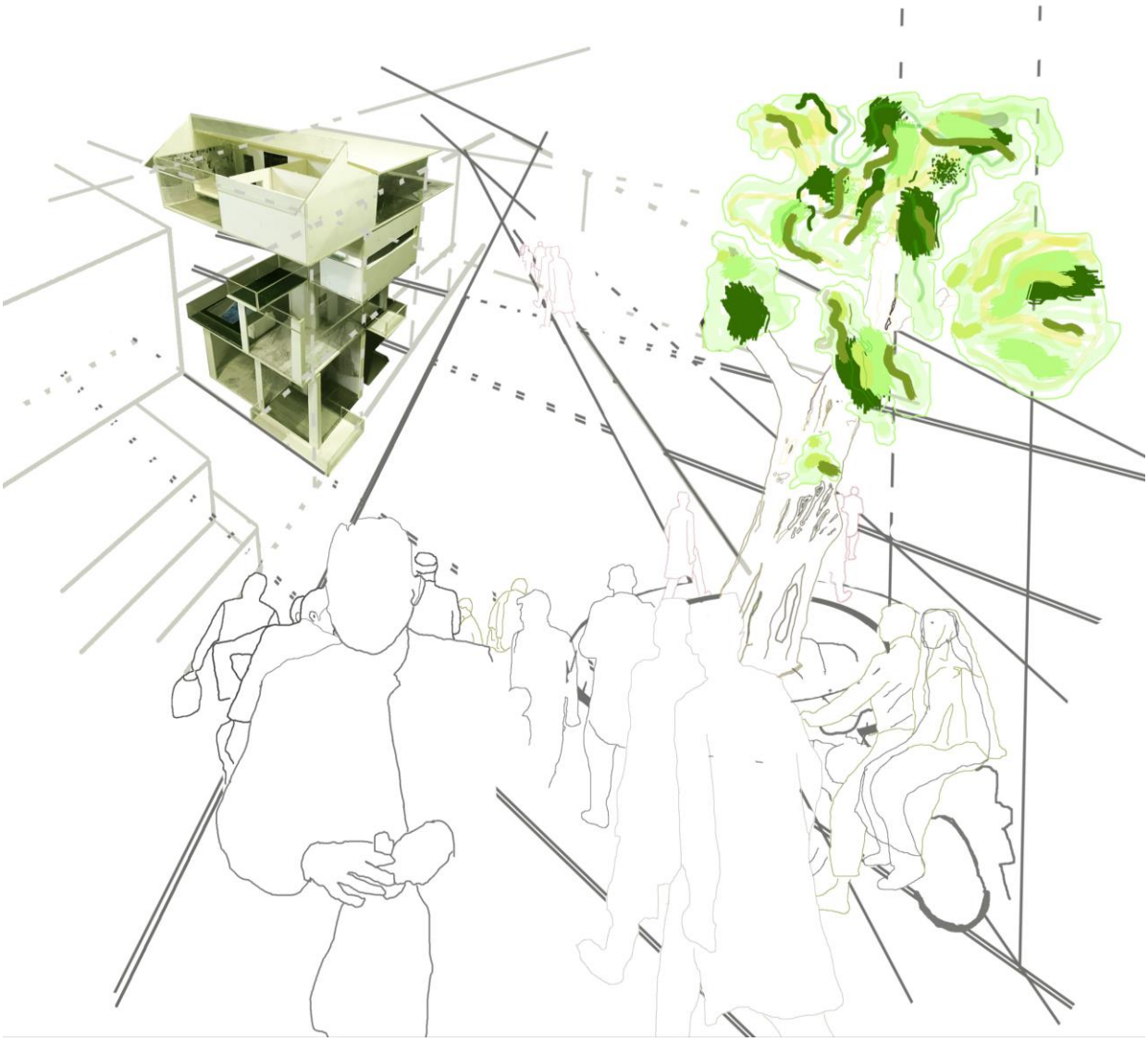

Fig 02. The ideal Architecture design solution is placed in an imaginary spatial grid. Some layers of context are added to create a living atmosphere. Layer of human activities and human mobility, Layer of nature i.e. tree, layer of an urban spatial Layout. In the given imagined scenario, it is clearly visible that as if the building is a quiet bystander, while the space around the building is of more value and concern to the real owners and active stakeholders of this space. In the imagined context, walkability, facilities to enhance integration, services to foster human basic needs, channels to minimize intersecting flows are of more importance.

Graphics: M. Waqas

Fig 03. An ideal Spatial grid is partially loaded with some more living layers. Layers of Culture, Colors, Patterns, Material, Peoples' Profession, Peoples' idea of workspace and Space adaptation. This imagined space partially loaded with human activities and space adaptation is giving this otherwise blank space canvas some meaning. The idea of culture and social adaptability as imagined in this space grid might seems to be very intriguing.

Graphics: M. Waqas

Fig 04. Social adaptation and configuration of spaces
An opposite scenario is created as compared to the previous examples. A real time active street is invaded by an imaginary spatial grid. Some spatial slots are made hidden to give it an imaginative depth, which might otherwise be getting very suffocating, overcrowded and overloaded. An alarm is set for the architect to remember always the gap between 'imagined space' and 'adapted space'.
Graphics: M. Waqas

DISCUSSION

The idea of space, culture, and Cultural Space

The idea of culture and cultural space in its pure form could seem quite "cultural", emotionally augmenting and rejoicing. Our popular and exaggerated sense of identity, belonging and space mechanics are somehow more like blueprints as shown in Fig 03. Notions as such bang our imagination and load our creative chambers to aspire to something we already are. Multiple layers of culture and considerably resolved space systems are imagined to gracefully perform in a serene location. Extravagance in terms of architectural elements or an extra struggle to add "design features" for the sake of creating surface value is barely visible.

Performance

As a matter of 'idea', the impulse of cultural space could have been very inspiring and could potentially ignited folklore sensitivity. Realization of this space ideal could have also been thoroughly worked out but the way that well thought space could potentially be publicly customized, might be dreadful and something the designer could have never thought of. Fig 04. Though some bits of existing events are switched off, for the sake of imagination to beautify those blank space canvases; In the visible space grid any sense of respect for space and 'others' is barely evident, social coherence and social order are but on a constant run, it is obvious that nobody owns this space and nobody dares to belong to this place. Perhaps all are passersby and not a single person wishes to relate to it. The abandoned orphan space was disappointed by all philanthropists.

If both the orphan space and well-fancied design are wed in their original forms. It would turn out to be as if elegance is coated with clumsiness and chastity prisoned in the dirt.

Building, Form, and Context

The distinctive building form could bring together different programs - the building model that seems like a unifying thread of transparency, translucence, and opaqueness. Fig 01. The model clearly exhibits the concept of spaces with a minimum requirement of artificial lighting. The form, no doubt is discrete and musical. This visual frame is all about building form; everything else is more or less in the background. It can rightly be termed as a dream of an architect placed in a dreamy world. The same building form if we place it in an altogether different setting Fig 02., where the essence of space organization is expressed altogether on a different scale. If these layers of reality are not considered at all, or loosely maintained after initial consideration, the social chaos that is flooding our streets with disconnection could end up rendering the dreams of an architect sleeping on a postmodern bed in a manner that could be exceptionally hilarious.

CONCLUSIONS

Whenever we space designers think of space organization, we fancy it to be something extremely exceptional. Perhaps we sculpt forms and spaces in imagination, which are precisely untouchable. We perceive and try to manufacture our designs to be more or less sacred entities. When those forms and designed space envelopes are set free to perform in real-world scenarios, its sanctity is challenged and

disrupted in a very liberal way. This attitude to customize buildings and adapt spaces in our own way, practicing free will, is a social trait. This cultural trend of space customization is passed on from one generation to another. We consider it to be an individual's right to respond in a manner that is utmost expressive, perhaps forgetting others and without taking into account the damage and nausea that one's inconsiderate response to a given set of spatial organization, creates for lots of passive others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are at least two possible handling mechanisms. We accept this as our culture and we announce chaos to be our social and spatial order, so to regard individual right to respond/react/act in whatsoever way to whatsoever space. In this case, our design would have to be flexible enough to accommodate this practice of free will of space customization. Another way out could be that we sensitize individuals - who play the role of active stakeholders in our society to get aligned with certain guidelines, rules and regulations. We must and probably do have space regulation mechanisms in the form of City and Regional Development Authorities; their jurisdiction to undertake certain guidelines be expanded and the workers therein are mobilized and facilitated in lay-outing the greater vision for making methodical and maintained societies. In this case, mechanisms have to be set in place to balance out and regulate the use and abuse of authority. Rigorous and consistent evaluation processes would not only make possible the implementation of those regulations but would also keep a persistent eye on regulators. There would be a constant need of updating those regulations, of course.

Architect, without space regulation mechanisms, alone, is more like a solo performer who performs his magic tricks just to please his own person and to get applause of standing creatures existing within his own being. The Hellenic oath, that all citizens made and it's an oath we are all required to make. "Which states 'I will leave this city more beautiful than I entered it" (Richard Rogers Interview, 2013).

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