

ARCHITECTURE - SPACE AND PHENOMENA

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Abstract

This paper explores the interrelation between space and time from an architectural perspective. Space is viewed as a relative, impartial platform essential for life, while time is tied to memory and events. Space is a blank canvas with infinite crisscross planes, neutral without limitations.

The study aims to correlate 'Space as Space' and 'Space as Phenomenon,' highlighting the diverse nature of events, its intellectual and artistic expressions. The method involves comparing abstract, time-free representations of space with memory-based and time-bound spatial representations. Relevant approaches to the subject are analysed.

The analysis reveals the inevitable nature of diverse happenings and their intellectual reactions, which manifest in architecture, arts, and design. It critiques the global trend towards uniform artistic and architectural aesthetics. The paper advocates for celebrating cultural diversity through native perspectives and overlapping phenomena, maintaining cultural diversity and validating indigenous expressions in architecture, arts, and design.

INTRODUCTION

Human existence and architecture are inseparable. The environment is the most important factor in a person's life. Each distinct location's personality and character are supported and enhanced by well-designed buildings. For example, a hospital fosters health and healing; a school provides an environment that improves teaching and learning; and a home maintains privacy, comfort, and intimacy. As a result, it is often recognized that most people spend most of their time indoors at home.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Phenomenology and Critical theory are the two widespread methods used to investigate architecture in the real-world scenario. Eran Neuman describes a method as a scientific study that focuses on contextual utility of spaces while taking different aspects of

culture, society, and power politics into account (Aravot, 2010). Iris Aravot, on the other hand focused on using place-specific and relatively more objective elements like light, shadow, landscape, materials, and space poetics (Tran, 2018).

Places:

Since geography has been recorded in writing, the word "place" has been in use. However, it wasn't until the 1970s that it was conceptualized as a specific location with its own set of associations and meanings (Plevoets, 2015). A meaningful place is one that combines location, locale, and a sense of place all at once. The location is the unmovable point in space with precise coordinates and observable separations from other places. Locale is a term that describes a place's physical surroundings for social interactions or

just how it looks, including roads, parks, and buildings. The sense of place refers to the feelings and emotions that a place evokes, dealing with the vaguer meanings associated with a location. These connotations may be unique and private or collective. Mediation and representation are necessary for creating a shared sense of place. For instance, even people who have never been to Islamabad, Karachi, or Dubai have some idea of these cities thanks to the meanings created in media such as books, movies, advertisements, and other forms of mediation.

For the most part, social and human scientists have ignored the unbreakable reality that humans exist in places where they exist. It is hoped that phenomenologists will focus their attention on how humans are constantly immersed, intertwined, and embedded in worlds that are spatial, political, environmental, and architectural over the next thirty years. Where we are affects who we are in part, and this “whereness” necessitates a forceful phenomenological explanation (Seamon, 2019).

Phenomenology:

Phenomenology can be thought of as both a philosophy and an investigational strategy. Although phenomenology is a vast and complicated subject, a few points can briefly describe it here. It emphasizes consciousness and experiences that are conscious, such as judgments, perceptions, and emotions. Humans are included because they are embodied beings who experience life through their physical bodies. Phenomenologists are most interested in learning about the experience of living it, as opposed to just the response to experience. Psychology, education, and healthcare all use phenomenology as a method of inquiry. Well-known studies of this type include Benner's (1984) account of nurses' transitions from practice novice to expert (Plager, 1994).

According to philosopher Brice R. Wachterhauser (1986), the human sciences require a set of useful rules to direct their quest for truth (Seamon, 2017b). Wachterhauser provides four evaluation criteria to help concretize this concept, which are especially pertinent to studies in architectural and environmental phenomenology. Comprehensiveness, semantic depth, inclusivity, and architectonic structure are the four criteria.

These four criteria are valuable because they connect the quality of a phenomenological study with its research outcomes, rather than with theoretical assertions or methodological steps. Does the study offer a comprehensive descriptive or conceptual framework that thoroughly presents the phenomenon in question? Does it provide an interpretation that resonates with a wide range of readers and makes sense in the context of similar situations, whether past, present, or future? Does the study consider other research related to the topic and offer an interpretive structure to place and clarify that research? Does it effectively integrate its descriptive and interpretive elements into a cohesive conceptual framework that is both experientially and intellectually meaningful? Wachterhauser (1986) points out that these criteria are not strict rules or necessary conditions. Instead, they should be viewed as heuristic ideals that guide inquiry in various situations without being universally binding (Wachterhauser, 1986).

Over time, buildings and their lifeworlds undergo physical deterioration, as well as structural, functional, and user changes. Stewart Brand has identified six architectural elements that affect a building's longevity: stuff, space plan, services, skin, structure, and site (Brand, 1995).

According to Seamon (2017) Stewart Brand has suggested that Stuff refers to furnishings and equipment that are frequently replaced. Space plan denotes the interior layout, which changes more often in commercial structures than in houses. Services encompass infrastructure such as plumbing and electrical systems, which typically require replacement every 7-15 years. Skin includes exterior surfaces that change approximately every 20 years due to technological advancements and fashion trends. Structure pertains to foundations and weight-bearing elements that can last from 30 to 300 years. Site refers to the physical location and context, which generally outlast the buildings themselves. These components help determine whether a building can sustain itself over time or become derelict (Seamon, 2017a).

Social Construct of a Place:

Humanistic geographers gained a deep comprehension of place as something that is sensed and experienced. But they frequently ignored the ways

in which power shapes the construction, upkeep, and contestation of places and their significance. Humanism tended to emphasize either a universal human subject or individuals. A critical approach to place was developed in the 1980s by geographers who were influenced by post-structuralism, feminism, Marxism, and humanism in order to solve this problem (Cresswell, 2009).

Aesthetics and Phenomenology:

Aesthetic theories, which emphasize "pure aesthetics" as an objective enjoyment of art that is independent of function, started to take off in the 18th century. Philosophically speaking, "purity" denotes indifference, yet in architecture it can refer to structural integrity or the absence of adornment (Melchert, 1999). Concepts are seen as "free" and "pure" in Kantian aesthetics, devoid of preconceived notions (Fenner, 1999). But the idea of pure aesthetics is called into question by architecture's intrinsic usefulness. Disinterest works for art, but not for architecture, which is highly contextual and utilitarian, according to Fenner. The idea of "pure architecture" is therefore complicated and frequently incongruous.

According to architectural phenomenology, habitation is an "existential foothold," which means it is more than just physical shelter; it is a space where life occurs (Norberg, 1980). Architecture responds to our need for protection by designing places that complement our emotions and everyday routines. This sort of architecture is created based on how materials and buildings work in certain contexts, rather than for aesthetic purposes. The aesthetics of such design are derived from its existential function, not from economic luxury. This strategy is comparable to how creatures, such as termites that build mounds, construct structures that sustainably adapt to their surroundings.

Outdoor and indoor spaces and architectural phenomenology:

A phenomenological framework is necessary to redefine transparency in architecture as a means of integrating indoor and outdoor experiences (Valle, 1998). Phenomenology had to shift its focus from visual perception to actual embodied interaction. Although the "literal/phenomenal transparency" thesis of Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky brought spatial simultaneity through Cubist analysis, their binary approach falls short in capturing the full human experience, leading to a critical re-examination of "phenomenal" in architecture (Mertins, 1996).

Merleau-Ponty's idea of depth as a channel for existential interaction is reflected in the three SANAA projects (1999, 2005 and 2015), which show transparency as a buffer zone where material/immaterial, visible/invisible, and literal/phenomenal layers come together (Kang & Park, 2021). The study promotes a phenomenological transparency that combines geometric and experiential spaces by giving embodied experience and environmental awareness precedence over simple visual permeability (Blau, 2008). This reveals architecture's ability to evoke life's essence through sensuous, sustainable connections between indoor and outdoor realms.

METHODOLOGY

A thorough literature review serves as the theoretical basis for the research methodology, which also includes graphical analysis of basic case studies to visually interpret temporal and spatial dynamics and the integration of lifelong experiences as a professional architect and user to offer practical insights. A well-grounded analysis of the phenomenology of space and time in architecture that is based on both scholarly research and practical application is ensured by this comprehensive approach.

THE DISCOURSE

Space and Phenomena

Case01:

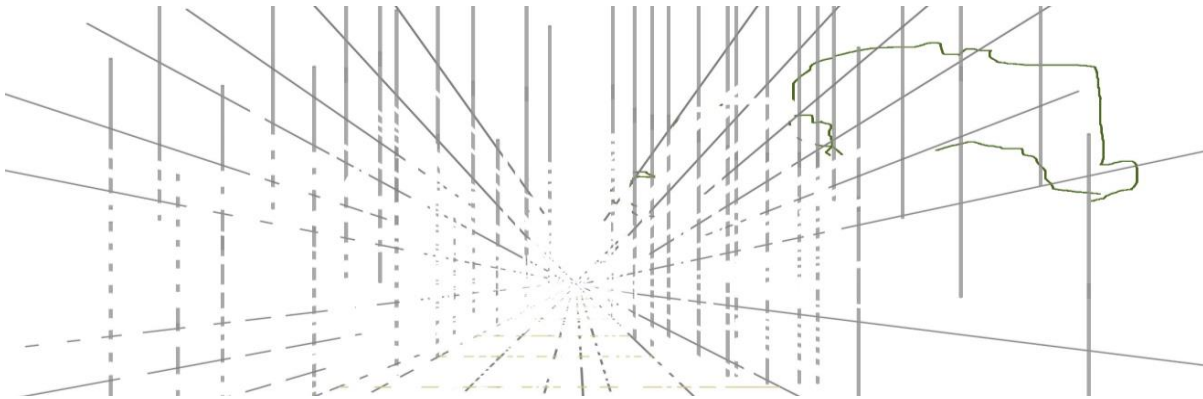


Fig 1.1. One-point Perspective spatial grid; a method to perceive space in its ideal form,

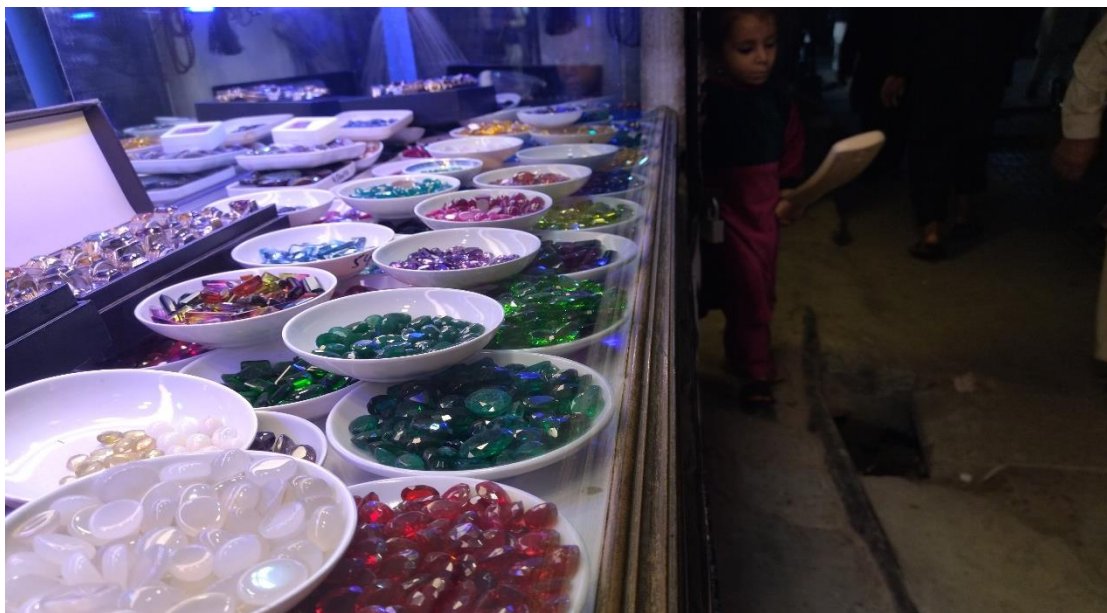


Fig 1.2. A capture of street scene in '*Andaroon Shehr*' (old city) Peshawar

In Fig1.1 a typical one-point perspective is drawn. This hypothetical representation is a timeless representation and is true for any moment of time and any location. The event recorded in Fig 1.2 is a frozen memory and might not occur in time and space again. The arrangements of pots, gems, the shapes of gems within the pot, the kid focus on his bat, the passersby

in the shadow, their sandals, clothes design and color, hairstyle, the topics of discussion, the thoughts they were having while passing through the street and most importantly the memory-image that is formed on the observer's imaginative canvas; are all only one time happenings, perhaps.

Case02:

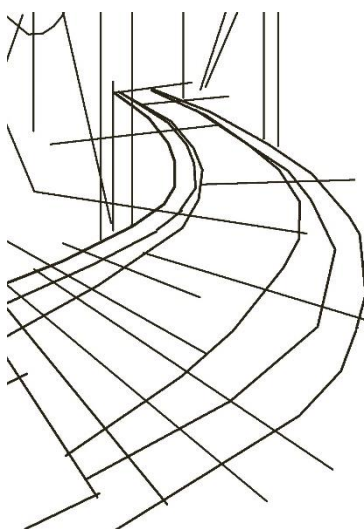


Fig 2.1. Monochromatic illustration



Fig 2.2 An abstract rendition

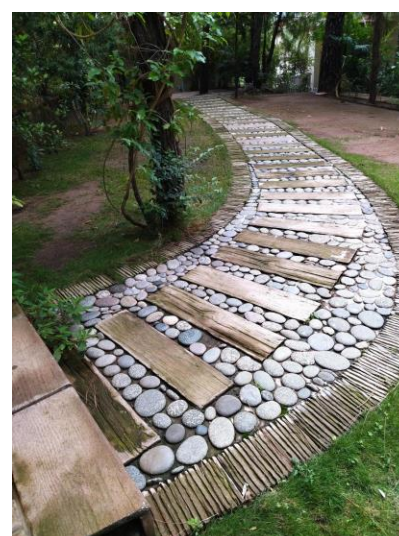


Fig 2.3 An actual capture of physical space

In Fig2.1 A monochromatic haphazard lines are free to be interpreted. It could either be read as 3d space or 2d space. Both 2d and 3d interpretations of the given illustration are infinite. Fig2.2. is still an abstract representation with only fixation of color palette. Again, it could further be interpreted and read in several ways. Fig2.3 is an active livable space, and the essence of this space is a permanent memory with given parameters. The kind of activities, company, nature of visit and the reflections that this kind of material arrangements were stirring from observer and other properties of physical objects, frozen in the frame are totally timebound events and may not occur in time again.

1. Phenomenology: Human interaction with Space

1a. Space: The idea of Space is more like a favorable platform where we exist in our present manifestations and limitations as a species, in certain conditions that can be marked as essentials for life. Space is an ideal opportunity that perfectly relates to human life parameters as an organism. Space is a potential canvas and the 'perception of space' as an object that begins naturally as imaginary sets of horizontal and vertical planes. The default condition of Space could be

imagined as a blank canvas that consists of an infinite number of crisscross planes. In essence, by its core space could be imagined as neutral in the absence of all subsequent limitations.

1b. Natural Environment: It sets the foremost parameters by marking the primary attributes of space. The environmental attributes are quantitative and are thus measurable, for instance Global coordinates, Geography, Topography, Climate, Temperature and precipitation etc. The given quantitative constituents of natural environments have diverse values and form a range of characteristics, which provide unique features to almost every region of the globe. The primary classification of 'Regions' across the globe could easily be done based on prevailing natural environmental conditions.

1c. Flora: A very important and evidently perceptible natural layer that corresponds to the canvas of Space is flora. Indigenous flora is a natural extension of any location and is the most befitting response to any given Space as canvas. Native flora organically adapts to the predominant climatic conditions with zero or minimum maintenance required for its survival. Flora

corresponds to all set attributes of the Environment e.g., Geography and Climate type etc.

1d. Fauna: Fauna primarily inhabits prevailing flora, cohosted by natural environment and topography of a certain region. If a specific environment ceases to offer its favors, a living organism would either cease to exist or would at least be listed as an endangered species.

These natural layers set a stage for further actions and human interventions that actively give birth to a chain of happenings that are closely linked and interwoven with each other. The set of events taken place on a certain natural setting on any given time, if recorded becomes known history of any given region and its inhabitants. The history formulates culture, identity, traits, norms, values, and other trends that is deduced in the form of “Present” of any human society. Knowledge both physically and metaphysical is a continuous intra and inter-generational legacy that seems to remain immortal.

2. Place - Memory of Space

Natural setting is the performative stage that act like relatively a more stable background set in most of the cases, while more swiftly changing human interactions are processed as the foreground memory by majority of percipients. The chain of life events, individual personal experiences, his/her social interactions, his/her encounters with space settings and spatial configurations establish the basic measure of comparison and criterion for subject individual or groups of individuals.

2a. Space Setting – Foremost Reference: The fundamental elements of space formulate baseline conditions that are set as default natural parameters with no/ limited /partial interventions. The objective setting that includes material configuration and climate of any location forms the foremost Reference for perceptible observers. The idea of Space would always be gauged with reference to the experience, memory or recollection of a default space setting as previously experienced by a spectator.

2b. Events: A series of sequential happenings, closely linked with each other from the basis of observation

for any individual or groups of individuals. The chain of happenings acts as a coordinate system of any observer. The memory of these events morphs and keeps updating humans’ perception’. Perception could simply be understood as current view/vision possessed by any individual in the ‘present’ that is deeply rooted in his/her past experiences and might also be holding a projection about some time in future.

2c. Experience: Life events unfold at specific times and upon specific space settings. The same ‘event’ or sets of events are experienced differently by different perceivers. The perceivers can broadly be classified based on ‘age groups and variance in analysis done by a variety of ‘mindsets. The individualistic interpretations of events, dubbed as experiences, are based on personal preferences, involvement, level of ownership and relevance etc. For instance, a kid A would recollect an event x that has taken place on a point of time x_t and space x_0 . Kid A would identify event x according to his/her experience in terms of the terms as the ‘brightest ever’. On the other hand, kid B would recollect the same event as the ‘dullest ever; based on a very simple reason that kid A was the sole performer having the limelight, while kid B was a passive participant.

3. Reality - a time-bound phenomenon

The interpretation of reality is completely dependent upon the reflections it emancipates from the receivers’ perceptive devices in the form of concepts like imaginations, ideas, views, emotions, wishes and idealization of the receptors criteria of right, positive, negative, sharp or dull etc. Reality, hence, is a relative idea and that is why ‘sets of realities coexist on the giant canvas of Space. Individuals have experienced different sets of realities, have multiplicity in the value systems and have thus a diversity in their evaluation mechanisms.

The evaluation tools and frameworks might also be influenced and inspired by the evaluator’s interaction with fellow humans and the evaluator’s exposure to events taking place in a space setting at a specific point of time as interpreted by different observers on the basis of an alternate value/evaluation system.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has examined the complex interplay between time and space, examining how these factors influence human memories and experiences. The dual character of spatial representations has been brought to light by our examination of space as both a timeless, abstract idea and a time-bound fact. The research emphasizes how crucial it is for architectural design to consider both the phenomenological and physical characteristics of space.

The results imply that space is essentially a blank canvas that takes on significance depending on the memories and activities it contains. For designers and architects who want to create spaces that speak to cultural diversity and human experiences, this contradiction is essential. The study promotes a well-rounded strategy that considers both indigenous viewpoints and international trends to maintain the diversity and depth of architectural responses.

Conclusively, the phenomenological investigation of space and memory provides significant understanding of the construction of significant locations. We may create surroundings that not only satisfy functional needs but also enhance human life by having cultural and emotional importance by recognizing the diversity of experiences and the innate capacity for varied expressions.

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