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## ARCHITECTURE AND EDUCATION: THE QUESTION OF EXPERTISE AND THE CHALLENGE OF ART

In so far as architecture is considered as an art an established approach emphasises the artistic and aesthetic expertise of architects and art historians. This elitist approach is however controversial. From a life-world perspective one can argue that if architecture is a central, even constitutive factor of human life, inhabitants rather than architects are the experts when it comes to the human value of architecture.

If the first view is elitist the second might be accused of populism. However, the juxtaposition of architects and inhabitants tends to overlook that there is a problem common to elitism and populism: both foreclose the access to knowledge and values from larger groups of people. Elitism, a sin of modernism, does this by claiming that many people are too unsophisticated or lack the required training for understanding what Architecture is about. Populism, the post-modern sin, does it by assuring that one does not really have to try to understand: there are no hidden secrets. Neither attitude calls forth discussion, negotiation, mediation of a group's or person's values and understanding.

There is a related paradox in the area of education. Constructionist approaches have gained large support, but how much has this changed the role of the teacher or educator? In the reflections that follow I focus on the element of art in architecture education. This is

The formalist approach to architecture: detail of the University of Jyväskylä s main building, designed by Alvar Aalto.
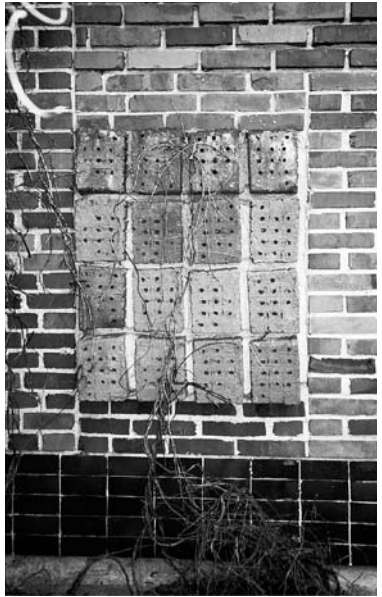
The life-world approach to architecture: detail of Alvar Aalto´s experimental house in Muuratsalo.

relevant to the understanding of architecture, where I start by describing two paradigms – one more narrowly aesthetic, the other departing from the "life-world" – that both involve expertise. But art is also a relevant perspective on education generally, especially in reflecting upon children's cultural situation. In this context, art education can be seen as an emancipatory and communicative project with particular aesthetic and ethical implications. My aim then is not to promote a certain kind of architecture education but rather to contribute to an awareness of the ethical implications of education in the arts – and its radical potential.

Architecture: a formalist and a life-world approach

In discussing architecture education it is important to make clear first of all how one understands architecture. The making of architecture involves political, social, technical, economic, aesthetic, ethical and ecological questions: to what extent are all of these relevant to education? The problem remains even if one defines architecture as an art, for the art of building and planning certainly requires a broad understanding that at least does not exclude any of the dimensions just mentioned. Yet the best way to make people sensitive to the aesthetic qualities of architecture may not be to start with economy.

In order to suggest the full aesthetic potential of architecture I sketch two polarised approaches to architecture as an art: the formalist and the life-world approach. Although they are rooted in modernist and post-modernist thinking respectively I want to emphasise their character as abstractions or ideal forms that are not even meant to make justice to every nuance. For reasons of simplicity, I focus on architecture as the design of buildings rather than city planning.

The formalist approach is object-centred: the building is conceived as a separate, designed object, complete within itself and unchanging. Architecture is a visual, abstract art of masses and volumes. Although each building has a material basis and the aesthetics of materials may be fore-grounded, there is a sense in which the essence of architecture is immaterial. For granted that perceiving a building requires movement, the body of building and perceiver alike are relevant primarily as means to the visual appearance of things. In the formalist approach architecture is a pure art form, truly like
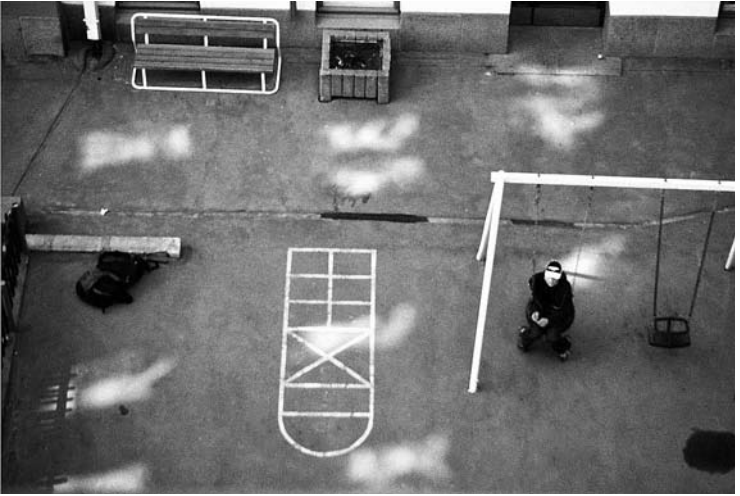
The use of space: teenagers in a Helsinki backyard.

frozen music. This is also the designer's approach in that it focuses on aspects that she can influence.

The formalist approach offers a path towards awareness of the possibilities of breath-taking beauty in architecture. Moreover, the dynamics of architectural form and the subtlety of colour in architecture, to mention but two relevant aspects, are never vacuous questions since architecture co-constitutes the world in which we live. The limitation of the formalist approach is, however, that it as such ignores the influence and relevance of context in architecture: place, time, and people.

The life-world approach to architecture makes a point precisely of the aspects forgotten by formalism. Life-world means culture and environment as inhabited. Rather than a separate object, a building is considered as a process that is part of other processes, human and natural – planned and unplanned. A building is not just an object for perception but essentially a cultural object whose meaning is dependent on use and history. The identity and aesthetic character of a building may be heterogeneous and impure and all the more fascinating for that, since architecture is drama and narrative as much as views. The very matter of building materials and their opposition to design intentions may add to the interest of a building. In life-world aesthetics all the senses as well as the feel of a building are relevant. It is partly a tacit affair – but not therefore beyond theorising.

The life-world approach thematises the inhabitant's relationship to architecture as one of participation rather than focused attention, involving two-way influence and identification. Here the word "inhabitant" is worth emphasising since the more common "user" implies a different relationship to buildings. According to the life-world approach a building is not an instrument in the world but a constitutive part of that world.

My view is that while both paradigms are valuable neither may be complete if we want to do justice to architecture as an art. (In addition, other paradigms are possible.) Both involve knowledge and expertise: some people are more inclined than others to detect the formalist or life-world values of our built world, and so there is room for processes of education. However while the paradigms can be combined it is important to be aware of their differences and in particular of the question – unavoidable while setting the agenda for architecture education – about who decides the paradigm, i.e., who "knows" what architecture

"is". This question is interesting if we take heed of the life-world approach as suggesting that expertise in architecture is not the same thing as being a professional: professionals do not always know best or perceive most acutely.

Children and the role of ˝art˝ in architecture education

While the formalist approach may not pose special questions for architecture education for children and young people as compared to adult-targeted education, the life-world approach certainly does. It is scarcely an exaggeration to claim that the life-world of a child is radically different from that of an adult even when they inhabit the same environment. In addition, questioning the professional monopoly of expertise in art education already incites watchfulness towards the different conditions of teacher and pupil, adult and child. Let me point to some existentials of childhood (conditions of being a child) – while also reminding of the differences among children as individuals and members of groups.

What a child is and what it is to be a child can best or perhaps only be understood relationally, as compared to what it is to be an adult, a grown-up.[1] Recognising the general differences in size, age, experience and abilities between children and adults I want in particular to pay attention to the power structures between children and adults. The child-adult relationship is inevitably asymmetrical, unequal and characterised by dependence. This may sound tough, but it is only after realising such basic conditions that genuine communication has some chance to succeed.

Unequal power relations prevail not least within the contexts of education that constitute a significant part of many children's life-world. If the idea of communication as transference of knowledge is generally dubious, it is even more so when the parts are unequal and have different perspectives. Paradoxically although constructionist approaches are widely supported in theory, actual teaching practices are largely authoritarian. That the teacher knows best may be inevitable in much teaching and, if understood and conveyed in a balanced way, it may be a source of trust in the teacher. However – to again refer to architecture education – this situation does not go very well with a life-world approach or with art.

On the other hand, if the situation of education generally is somewhat like this, the character of art education may be different. Moreover, "art" may even have a special function in education. Especially within the modern tradition art and the aesthetic are a field characterised by the prevalence of open-ended, undecided questions. Aesthetics challenges settled objectified models of right and wrong by calling for personal engagement as well as critical and reflective judgement and debate. There are many emphases and methods of art education: along these lines I shall only briefly discuss education as art, e.g., the role of "art" in processes of education.

First, such an idea of art education requires that art is included in the process of education rather than being only a goal or content. If norms are settled beforehand, education is merely the mediation of a canon, not a critical activity. Second, my suggestion is that we take advantage of art's character where play, interaction and engagement are often foregrounded and imagination is given a more prominent role than in most everyday activities. These elements are important in themselves, but in addition they reflect back upon the roles and values of everyday, normal life. It is precisely in this way that the temporary and unreal, other space of art may change "the way things are".

On the whole then, art allows for a freer approach, an imaginative testing of possibilities and an aesthetic rather than rational communication. Seen in the context of interaction, education and communication, art in addition has a significant potential to enhance the recognition of other persons, whether adult or child, precisely by not defining identities but by allowing our appearance in the undecided, fugitive field of play. What we are and how the world is are negotiable issues. Already for this reason art is directly relevant to social, ethical and political issues.

Let me now point to elements that are at play and some possible directions for architecture education considered as a communicative event in the sense just described. Taking seriously and valuing children's life-world and the asymmetry of the child-adult relationship, it becomes especially important to notice and make room for children's environmental relationships and competence. Quite obviously, children have a natural talent for exploring and appropriating space, making it their own and finding affordances through various activities of play and adventure. In this, they are more active than adults, who have been trained to behave "properly".

26 Children can teach architecture by indicating values and affordances
    that are as humanly relevant as those of the adult perspective.
    In this play, the role of adults remains – indicating meanings,
    values and techniques, offering stories, background, concepts and
    perspectives – but is also added to, since the adults are required to
    make themselves available for play as well. Both sides (children and
    adults) must be at play, at risk, otherwise the play is ruined.

    Finally the importance of architecture education within the field of
    art education generally is connected to the importance of recognition
    in public space. Architecture evidently constitutes such space, thus
    to open it up for larger participation is important not only for the art
    of building, but also for society. To claim and occupy public space
    temporarily, not to speak of impacting on it permanently, are real
    forms of participation.

[1] If this is true the opposite is true as well, and the lack of reflection on
childhood in the humanistic disciplines can rightly be compared to the gender
blindness that prevailed until recently. The word "grown-up" is interesting in
that it suggests a person who grows no more.