

GENEALOGY OF “PLACE” IN ARCHITECTURE:  
HISTORY, CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS AND INSIGHTS

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YELİZ ÖZMETİN

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HISTORY, CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS AND INSIGHTS**

submitted by **YELİZ ÖZMETİN** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Architecture in Architecture Dept., Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Canan Özgen  
Dean, Graduate School of **Natural and Applied Sciences**

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargın  
Head of Department, **Architecture**

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Cengizkan  
Supervisor, **Architecture Dept., METU**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Examining Committee Members**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Baykan Günay  
City and Regional Planning Dept., METU

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Cengizkan  
Architecture Dept., METU

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Güven A. Sargın  
Architecture Dept., METU

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. F. Candaş Bilisel  
Architecture Dept., METU

\_\_\_\_\_

Assist. Prof. Dr. Lale Özgenel  
Architecture Dept., METU

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: 02.September.2008

**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

Name, Last name : Yeliz Özmetin

Signature :

## **ABSTRACT**

### **GENEALOGY OF “PLACE” IN ARCHITECTURE: HISTORY, CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS AND INSIGHTS**

Özmetin, Yeliz  
M.Arch., Department of Architecture  
Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Cengizkan

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“Place” is a complex and contested term being exposed to various theorizations and positions in diverse fields. Aiming to get an understanding of what it may contribute to in the discourse of architecture, the thesis firstly offers a framework that helps to depict a genealogy of “place” through its itinerary in phenomenologically driven human geography where it originated as a conceptual term, and in architecture to which became an important issue of debate and theorization over the relation between building activity and the ground. Conveying an understanding of “place” as an ethical component in architecture’s agenda, the thesis defines architecture as the “identification of place”, and comes up with ideas for a conceptual framework of “gathering” insight concerning the physical location/condition, namely “place”, through the study and understanding of its components, namely “reading” them. The significance of defining, listening to and interpreting physical location/condition for a more “enriched mission of architecture” within developing a notion of dialogue is addressed in this thesis.

Keywords: Place, physical location and condition, reading, architectural design

## ÖZ

### MİMARLIKTA “YER”İN ŞECERESİ: TARİH, GÜNCEL YORUM VE ANLAYIŞLAR

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“Yer” farklı alanlarda bir çok teorileştirme ve pozisyona açık, kompleks ve çekişmeli bir terimdir. “Yer”in mimarlık söyleminde nelere katkıda bulunabileceğini anlamayı amaçlayan bu tez, öncelikle, “yer”in kavramsal bir terim olarak ortaya çıktığı, fenomenolojik temelli beşeri coğrafyada ve bina aktivitesi ve toprak arasındaki ilişkinin üzerine oluşturulan tartışma ve teorileştirmelere etken önemli bir konu olarak mimarlıktaki yolculuğu üzerinden “yer”in şeceresini göstermeye değin bir anlama çerçevesi sunar. Bu tez mimarlığın gündemine etik bir bileşen olarak eklemlendirilebilecek bir yer anlayışı öne sürerken mimarlığı “yerin tanınması – ayırt edimi” olarak tanımlar ve fiziksel durumun/koşulun bileşenlerinin incelenmesi ve anlaşılması, başka bir deyişle okunması ile “yer” üzerine bir anlayış çıkarabilmeye ilişkin kavramsal bir çerçeve üzerine fikirler koyar. Bu tezde, daha etkin bir mimarlık adına fiziksel durumun/koşulun diyalog kavramı eşliğinde tanımlanması, dinlenmesi ve anlamlandırılmasının önemine işaret edilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yer, fiziksel konum ve durum, okuma, mimarlık tasarımı

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 On the Ambiguous Nature of “Place”

...there is very little considered understanding of what the word “place” means... Place is a word that seems to speak for itself (Cresswell, 2005, 4).

Certainly the conception of “place” (especially in the field of architecture) is rather a complex one as the word “place” is mostly associated with confusion. Namely the ambiguous nature of the word makes it somehow hard to grasp in certain theoretical contexts within individual disciplines. As Cresswell puts, “there is very little considered understanding of what the word ‘place’ means” (Cresswell, 2005, 4).

As urban planner Mahyar Arefi states, that above-mentioned confusion about the word “place” is due to its wide scale of geography, as from neighborhood to country; due to its suggestions of “different things” to “different people” and due to its unbounded and stretched structure (Arefi, 1999, 180). “40.46°N 73.58°W does not mean that much to most people... Replacing a set of numbers with a name means that we begin to approach ‘place’” (Cresswell, 2005, 2). As is stated:

Place is not a specialized piece of academic terminology. It is a word we use daily in the English-speaking world. It is a word wrapped in common sense. In one sense this makes it easier to grasp as it is familiar. In another sense, however, this makes it more slippery...

...place, then, is both simple (...) and complicated (Cresswell, 2005, 1).

Furthermore, “place is neglected”, says Malpas: “it is something of a truism to say that that which is closest and most familiar to us is often that which is most easily overlooked and forgotten” (Malpas, 1999, 19). He adds:

...while there are relatively few philosophical treatments of place that take up the concept as philosophically significant in its own right, this is indicative, not merely of a certain marginalisation or forgetting of place within philosophy, but of the very opacity of the notion itself (Malpas, 1999, 19).

In order to capture a sense of what “place” means, the nature of these confusions will surely be a concern throughout this study. It is, then, the purpose of this thesis to investigate / observe with critical attention the concept of “place” and its “valuable” relevance to architecture and everyday life, and to think it as a way of understanding wider contexts, that are (or may be) apparent between people and the world.

Human geographer David Harvey investigates in detail the above mentioned ambiguous nature of the word in his book “Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference”. He states that the word carries “a surfeit of meanings”, as he exemplifies:

To begin with, there are all sorts of words such as milieu, locality, location, locale, neighborhood, region, territory, and the like, which refer to the generic qualities of place. There are other terms such as city, village, town, megalopolis, and state which designate particular kinds of places and still others, such as home, hearth, “turf”, community, and nation, which have such strong connotations of place that it would be hard to talk about one without the other (Harvey, 1996, 208).

Human geographer Yi Fu Tuan’s consideration of “place” also exemplifies the ambiguous nature of the word. As he puts:

At one extreme a favourite armchair is a place, at the other extreme the whole earth (Tuan, 1977 in Cresswell, 2005, 20).<sup>1</sup>

Place can be as small as the corner of a room or as large as the earth itself: that the earth is our place in the universe is a simple fact of observation to homesick astronauts ... It is obvious that most definitions of place are quite arbitrary. Geographers tend to think of place as having the size of a

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<sup>1</sup> Yi Fu Tuan, 1977, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press), 149.

settlement: the plaza within it may be counted a place, but usually not the individual houses, and certainly not that old rocking chair by the fireplace (Tuan, 1974 in Cresswell, 2005, 20).<sup>2</sup>

The wide range of meanings possessed in “place” makes it a complex word with certain confusions, eventually leaving “certain” theoretical conceptions of “place” in suspicion. However, this may not be seen as a weakness. David Harvey regards “the generality, the ambiguity, and the multiple layers of meanings” as advantageous (Harvey, 1996, 208). As Harvey comments about the ambiguous, multi-layered structure of “place”:

It suggests some underlying unity (or process of internalization) which, if we can approach it right, will reveal a great deal about social, political, and spatial practices in interrelation with each other over time (Harvey, 1996, 208).

Harvey’s commentary raises the issue of space and time, which are also due to importance. Harvey considers space and time as “fundamental concepts for almost everything we think and do” and he believes in the interrogation of “the social construction of space and time” in terms of its materiality, the results of which would provide an understanding and theorization of the world (Harvey, 1996, 208). In that situation, Harvey accredits the study of the “relational theory of space-time” through the study of “place”, posing an idea of a triumvirate of space-time-place which “can only be appreciated in relation to the processes of socio-ecological transformations” (Harvey, 1996, 207-209). For Harvey, “place” can be the primary medium for the empirical study of the social construction of space and time. As he comments:

Concepts of space and time affect the way we understand the world to be. And they also provide a reference system by means of which we locate ourselves (or define our “situatedness” and “positionality”, to use the language of chapter 3) with respect to that world. It is therefore impossible to proceed far with a discussion of space and time without invoking the term “place”. This in turn has implications for how we “place” things and how we think of “our place” in the order of things in particular (Harvey, 1996, 208).

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<sup>2</sup> Yi Fu Tuan, 1974, “Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective Progress”, *Human Geography* 6, 1974, 245.

In *People and Place: The extraordinary geographies of everyday life*, Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard also state about the possible connotations that “place” offers:

Place is also a term that defies easy definition, being depicted variously as a ‘bounded’ location, as a space of flows (i.e. open to variable external social, economic and political influences), as a locale defined through people’s subjective feelings, as the context for social and political relations or as a place created through media images (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, 7).

Within this frame, Holloway and Hubbard emphasize that there exists numerous approaches on defining the relationship between “people” and “place”, and “none of them is necessarily wrong” (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, 7). Thus, “place” is a very much contested term. Holloway and Hubbard also highlight the importance of thinking “people” and “place” “necessarily” together, especially in the discipline of human geography, as they comment:

... it is the **relationality** of people and places that is so important to geographical understanding. Thus, when we talk about ‘people and place’, the **and** is as important and ambiguous as the definition of the people or the place concerned. As a discipline which focuses on the role of space and place, it has become axiomatic within geography that as people construct places, places construct people (inferring a reciprocity between people and place) (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 7).

...people and places derive their identities from each other to a significant extent. Going a step further, we also need to emphasize that this relationality is not something which is fixed and unchanging. Relationships between people and places are always in a state of becoming rather than of simply ‘being’ (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 7-8).

## 1.2 Aim, Scope and Promise of the Thesis

As mentioned in the beginning, the complexity of the word makes it difficult to propose “certain” theoretical contexts. While the thesis does not attempt to create an exact and necessarily ‘true’ theorization over such a liberate and complex word, it should be kept in mind that, within this thesis, “place” is considered as both an

“object” and “a way of thought/understanding”. Within that respect, the following comment that “places as ‘things’ are quite obscure and hard to grasp...” and “...place is also a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world” comes into prominence within the limits of this thesis (Cresswell, 2005, 11). As Cresswell states:

To think of an area of the world as a rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment – as a place – is to free us from thinking of it as facts and figures.

Theory is a way of looking at the world and making sense of the confusion of the senses.

Different theories of place lead different writers to look at different aspects of the world. In other words **place is not simply something to be observed, researched and written about but is itself part of the way we see, research and write** (Cresswell, 2005, 11). [Bolds added by the author of the thesis]

Together with the wide range of meanings it captures, “place” is a frequently referred term that is utilized in disciplines related with humans, geography and the built environment. Consequently, besides its complexity, “place” has been an important topic in many disciplines, being part of the way it is seen and researched. As Arefi states:

Different disciplines routinely address certain components of place. Whereas economic geographers largely deal with place as location, architects, urban designers, physical planners, anthropologists or human geographers, among others, focus typically on the issues related to sense of place or people's attachment to and conception of their environment (Arefi, 1999, 180).

Cresswell extends the scale further:

The fact is that place is a contested concept and what it is that ‘place’ means is very much the subject of decades of debate in human geography as well as philosophy, planning, architecture and any number of other disciplines. To some in planning, place refers to the built environment. To ecologists, a place is rooted in a distinctive ecology – as a bioregion. To a philosopher, place is a way of being-in-the-world... (Cresswell, 2005, 12).

On the whole, we shall note that the concept of “place” within all the recent and varying literature resonates varying calls. Its concept is a matter of debate especially



in architecture where theory and practice merge in unprecedented ways. Focusing on a particular vision that appreciates the credibility of “place”, from Relph’s call for the avoidance of “placelessness” up to now, the concept has been considered as a denominator of the current changes in spatial modes of production that covers many other “large” issues such as globalization and modernization. Within the pluralist approaches that emerged since 1960s in regard to contextual and or historical problems and the recent approaches covering the issues of ecology and sustainability, the power of “place” has been utilized by many academicians, activists and practitioners, all encompassing it in various spheres. As stated by Berleant, “our understanding and respect for the importance of place have widened and deepened from the work undertaken over the past thirty years” (Berleant, 2003, 42). What does place tell us in all these respects? Does place still matter in the age of supermodernity?

In that respect, while being aware of the highly wide scope of theorizations made upon the word, the thesis aims to make an overall glimpse over the differing reflections that the word has created upon different disciplines. In the very general, the thesis believes in the necessity of looking at or at least being aware of the big circle(s) that “place” created in different disciplines if one is to think about the word’s relevance/centrality to architecture. We may argue that transgressions within disciplines constitute important shifts in paradigms related with “place”.

The relevance of the concept of “place” in architecture as our main subject of study in this thesis firstly traces back to what it has depicted in numerous spheres for the last 50 years, and what it can depict, in the name of current conditions in architecture’s agenda. In parallel to that current agenda of architectural production, the thesis attempts to explore the relevance of design that regards “place” as denominator in the task of architecture. This search for “place” may also be regarded as a question that is asked in relation to the supermodern geography of our “bulldozed” landscapes for “profitability”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Terms gathered from Kenneth Frampton and Claude Schnaidt.

The thesis, then, attempts to understand, comprehend, present and discuss the existing literature on “place” upon the existing varying searches / spheres in terms of the conceptual frameworks, contents, interests and practices gathered towards the discourse on the word. The position of the thesis, in this respect, lays on a dialectical relationship inbetween various spheres of theory and practice. To state roughly, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate and observe with critical attention the concept of place and its relevance to architecture and everyday life, and to think it as a way of understanding wider contexts that are (or may be) apparent between people and the world.

In the very general sense, the thesis aims to study (1) the nature of “place”, (2) its itinerary around human geography & phenomenology, and (3) how architecture possessed “place” as its subject since 1960s, while, in parallel, it aims to put up a framework of gathering insight concerning the physical location/condition, namely “place”. Apart from the understanding, comprehension and presentation of the concept of “place” through its genealogy, the thesis further aims to discuss and compose an awareness about the relevance of “place” to architecture, and hence, to relations between man and earth.

At the beginning, the thesis firstly offers a genealogical framework that helps to depict an understanding of “place” through its itinerary in phenomenologically driven human geography where it originated as a conceptual term. The study will namely attempt to define “place” through its being a central term in human geography. It is in this sense that some main assumptions and remarks about phenomenology which triggered the originary foundations of the discourse about place will be of concern.

In the third chapter, the thesis will interrogate the concept of place in architecture to which it became an important issue of debate and theorization over the relation between building activity and the ground. Namely, the thesis will convey a genealogical framework on how architecture possessed “place” as a subject since 1960s illustrating the transformations on the discussion on physical location /

condition when reactional movements in relation to the consideration of physical location / condition (either labelled under the heading of place or not) gained relevance in architectural discourse. Within these respects, the genealogy of “place” in architecture will be dealt through two segments.

Firstly, the transformations by means of changes in production modes reorganising the spatial practice will be given under the heading of “history of spaces”. Secondly, being the consequences of transformations in spatial practices and transgressions via disciplines, the conceptualizations of “place” in the name of “actions and reactions” will be presented. At this part, the thesis will firstly look over the idea of physical location / condition in architecture upon the concepts of “site” and “context” as the words also connote the components of “place”. Secondly, the phenomenologically driven considerations of “place” will be of concern as they form the basis for most of the discussion over the word. Thirdly, critical attitudes to “place” by means of discrediting its importance will be studied together with that paradigmatic shift in the name of “from place to non-place” that will be dealt with through anthropologist Marc Augé’s contributions to the term “supermodernity” – as a term to define the late capitalist phenomena.

The fourth chapter, through re-evaluations and re-considerations, carries discussions over “place” to more current times, aiming to discuss again the spheres created over the years since 1960s. The chapter addresses more current dimensions in the literature of writing and practice. It is presented that place continues to be an issue of debate in relation to today’s cultural condition of supermodernity. Upon the current writings and practices exemplified with some cases, the concept’s vital existence for the poetics of life and architecture will be examined through its reactional utilizations within the task of architecture as a way of mediation with the earth. The thesis gives reference to the term “identification of place” coined by Unwin who considers this process of identification as a fundamental task in architecture; a term which depicts, in Mugerauer’s words, the architect’s “sensitivity to local place and genuine

dwelling” (Mugerauer, 1994, 183). In parallel, in relation to Moneo’s ranking of “place” as an important phenomenon whose “murmur” needs to be listened, it is argued in this thesis that, in creating or identifying places, the physical environment as one of the overlapping constituents of “place” seems to be the very first proposition gathered by the architect and that its study may inform practice in various aspects.

Within this consideration, the definition and comprehension of the physical context is considered as vital, and at that point, the thesis looks once again to the words depicting physical location such as site, context, and landscape. The thesis aims to discuss the mediation of the building activity with “place” under the heading of “reading” as a way of building up theory and informing practice. In relation to this mediation; defining, listening to and interpreting physical location/condition for a more “enriched mission of architecture” within developing a notion of dialogue is aimed.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEFINING PLACE

“Place” is a frequently referred term in many disciplines and surely, it is somehow hard to define the term in relation to one particular discipline. As mentioned before, the term is used in a wide context within different disciplines. As a beginning, however, within that wide scope, the reverberances of some of the conceptualizations and definitions (developed about the word) in disciplines where place is referred to as a central subject matter constitutes importance. In that respect, human geography as a discipline which captures “place” as a central subject matter, and phenomenology as a school of thought which through its main assumptions and remarks triggered the originary foundations of the conceptions of place will be of concern in this chapter while firstly we will define the term in a general sense.

What does “place” refer to, in the very simple sense? Philosopher J. E. Malpas gathers five main senses of “place”:

(i) a definite but open space, particularly a bounded, open space within a city or town; (ii) a more generalised sense of space, extension, dimensionality or ‘room’ (and, understood as identical with a certain conception of space, place may, in this sense, be opposed to time); (iii) location or position within some order (whether it be a spatial or some other kind of ordering, hierarchical or not); (iv) a particular locale or environment that has a character of its own; and (v) an abode or that within which something exists or within something exists or within which it dwells (Malpas, 1999, 21-22).<sup>4</sup>

As Malpas informs about the etymology of the term, the word carries “notions of openness and spatiality”, as it “(along with related terms in other European languages such as the German, ‘*Platz*’, French, ‘*place*’, and Italian, ‘*piazza*’) derives from the

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<sup>4</sup> Information gathered by Malpas from *Oxford English Dictionary*, 937-42.

classical Latin *platea* meaning ‘broad way’ or ‘open space’ and from the Greek *plateia*, also meaning ‘broadway’” (Malpas, 1999, 22).

Apart from the etymological roots and dictionary meanings of the term, “meaning” and “experience” are put forward as main keywords; as is offered by the following quotation which deliberately indicates a general look over attempts to define place:

The majority of writing about place focuses on the realm of meaning and experience. Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the contest of power (Cresswell, 2005, 12).

This remark is proposed over John Agnew’s three-part definition of “place” as “a meaningful location” which is credited as accounting for most definitions made on the word (Cresswell, 2005, 7-8). The three parts considered in that definition are “location”, “locale” and “sense of place”; and as is evaluated by Cresswell, “location” refers to the “static or non-static ...”, “locale” refers to “the material setting for social relations” and “sense of place” refers to “the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place” (Cresswell, 2005, 7-8).

Arefi also states that, “place in its genre is commonly reduced to the three elements of locale, location and sense of place” (Arefi, 1999, 180).<sup>5</sup> Bearing upon the work of Agnew and Duncan, Arefi defines, in a different way, the three elements to make up a “framework” to be able to evaluate the current transformations in the concept of place:

Locale primarily deals with social relations, while location emphasizes how economic transactions shape and affect the conception of place. Sense of place, however, examines people's ties and attachment to their places, or what some have called the 'structure of feeling' (Arefi, 1999, 180).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See J. Agnew & J. Duncan, 1989, “Introduction”, in J. Agnew & J. Duncan (eds.), 1989, *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imagination* (Boston, Unwin Human), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Arefi, 1999, 180. See J. Agnew, 1987, “The geographical mediation of state and society”, in *Place and Politics* (Boston, Allen & Unwin).

Edward Relph, as a pioneer for most of the inspirations of studies on place evaluates “meaning” as a basic component in the considerations of place; as Relph puts (bearing upon the work of Lukermann) “a place is not just the ‘where’ of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon” (Relph, 1976, 3).<sup>7</sup>

Defining “place” under the influence of human geographers who coined the emphasis on human experience within the theorizations of place, Arnold Berleant, professor of aesthetics, puts that “in its basic sense, place is the setting of the events of human living”, and that it is “the locus of action and intention, and present in all consciousness and perceptual experience” (Berleant, 2003, 42). Berleant further depicts a picture of some generally accepted considerations in place, that “can contribute to the sense of a distinctive presence that we associate with the special character of place”:

1. “a special sense of physical *identity* that a location can convey”,
2. “physical *coherence*”,
3. the relevance of human factor to the above mentioned features, “the consciousness of significance” (Berleant, 2003, 44).

While noting the fashionable use of the word in many fields “from the mass media to advertising, from the travel industry to the real estate industry, from sociology to geography”, Berleant points out that “aesthetic” dimension which includes the “experience of the most primary sort” and thus, which “may be the critical of all” is “easily overlooked” throughout the literature accumulated on the theorizations of “place” (Berleant, 2003, 42). As Berleant defines the meaning of place “within” the consideration of aesthetic dimension:

The most general meaning of place as aesthetics, then, is a particular perceptual environment that joins a distinctive identity and coherence with a memorable character, and with which we actively engage in attention or action. An authentic sense of place, expressed in

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<sup>7</sup> Relph bears on the work of Lukermann for his definition of “place”.

Heideggerian language, involves 'being inside and belonging to *your* place both as an individual and as a member of a community, and to know this without reflecting upon it' (Berleant, 2003, 44).

As mentioned before, the term has been used within a very wide range of different connotations varying from "a favourite armchair" to "the entire world itself". The need to operate an understanding of making up a main reference idea rises up if one is to think about place. Within that context, Relph overviews the work of May in order to get an overall structure to discuss place. The ways that May depicted in order to show how place was used in different ways by different geographers are summarized by Relph:

First, it has been used to refer to the entire surface of the earth, as for instance in the idea of the earth as the place of man. Second, it has been used to refer to a unit of space such as a city, province, or country, in which sense it cannot be clearly differentiated from 'region'. Third, it has been used to refer to a particular and specific part of space and to what may occupy that space, "as when we think of our place of residence as being a particular building or talk of a place of worship or a place of amusement". Finally, place has been used to mean 'location' in the sense of exact position, although strictly location is more specific than place, for "place is made up of a number of things that can be specifically located" (Relph, 1976, 3-4).<sup>8</sup>

May's evaluation seems relevant in the way that it attempts to define the wide scope of meanings apparent in the structure of the word. May's third definition incorporating aspects of particularities upon space and human resonates for a definition of "place" especially in relation to architecture. As Relph states:

May argues that only in the third of these senses is there something about the idea of place, for in this meaning place appears to possess some "perceptual unity" that is given to it by our experiences with unique and real places (Relph, 1976, 4).

That (reference to) "perceptual unity" may be understood as a further attempt to put up a coherent structure to conceptualize "place". The very common definition of "place" as "a meaningful location" also carries out certain meanings. The fact that

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<sup>8</sup> Relph referring to the work of J. A. May. See J. A. May, 1970, *Kant's Concept of Geography* (University of Toronto, Department of Geography, Research Publication No.4), 214.



place is an “integrated and meaningful phenomenon” (Relph, 1976, 3) causes varying definitions. As is stated in Holloway & Hubbard, the very fact that “place” means something for somebody connotes a wide range of undefined elements; as “place” has been a major topic in many studies covering the issues of “place attachment”, “power relations”, “(imagined) boundaries”, “identity”, “order and segregation”, “(different) interest groups”, etc., on each of which a number of studies has been made from variable disciplines.

Within this context, as stated:

...the significance of place is not to be found in our experience of so much as in the grounding of experience in place, and that this binding is to place is not a contingent feature of human existence, but derives from the very nature of human thought, experience and identity as established in and through place (Malpas, 1999).<sup>9</sup>

Having mentioned about definitions of place put by thinkers from different disciplines that took place as subject matter, human geography sticks out in the way that it conceptualized the development of the term for a long time (almost from its beginning?) together with influences from other ways of thought, such as phenomenology and existentialism. As Cresswell puts, human geography “has place as one of its principle objects of study” (Cresswell, 2005, 1).

## **2.1 “Place” as a Central Term in Human Geography**

“Place” is an important topic and area of investigation for mostly human geography, being the material object of the discipline (Cresswell, 2005, 15). As Holloway & Hubbard inform about the aim of human geography:

The ways in which people perceive or imagine particular types of place (as places of beauty, leisure, rest or play) become central to our understanding of human geography, helping us to understand why some areas become the focus of particular types of human activity (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 3).

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<sup>9</sup> Malpas, 1999, writings from book cover.

Furthermore, surely, as was mentioned before, “place” is not solely an object for human geographers:

The word ‘place’ hides many differences. One confusing aspect of the genealogy of place is that place stands for both an object (a thing that geographers and others look at, research and write about) and a way of looking. Looking at the world as set of places in some way separate from each other is both an act of defining what exists (ontology) and a particular way of seeing and knowing the world (epistemology and metaphysics) (Cresswell, 2005, 15).

The consideration of “place” as a way of understanding the world through “seeing and knowing” also rises up the importance of the development of the term as a concept. In that respect, the itinerary of the word’s main conceptualizations should be considered. Cresswell highlights the development of the term as a concept since approximately 1950s, when “the agreement on the centrality of place to geography” was established through “the common-sense experienced differences between portions of the Earth’s surface” (Cresswell, 2005, 15-8). The idea of differentiation of unique places / regions was immanent at these times, as the point of concentration was on “differentiating one clearly defined region (place) from the next and explaining the logic of the definitions” (Cresswell, 2005, 17-8).<sup>10</sup>

It was during 1970s, when Canadian geographer Edward Relph emphasized, in his *Place and Placelessness* (of 1976), that “very little attempt had been made to actually define place and distinguish it from its sister concepts of region and area” (Cresswell, 2005, 12). As Relph depicts the “lack of interest” on place:

The apparent importance of place, both functionally and existentially, has not been reflected in examinations of either the concept of place or of the nature of experience of place. Even architects and planners have displayed a distinct lack of interest; yet their task can well be understood as ‘the possession of place’ ([bearing on the work of] Lyndon, 1962, pp.33-34), as the “creation of place” ([bearing on the work of] Gaudie, 1969, p.173), or as the development of a system of meaningful places that

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<sup>10</sup> As Cresswell puts, in the field of human geography, Fred Lukerman is referred as the first to write about “place”.

give form and structure to our experiences of the word ([bearing on the work of] Norberg-Schulz, 1969, p.226) (Relph, 1976, 1).<sup>11</sup>

Relph also points out the uninterest on “place” in geography and evaluates it as “surprising”, because of the consideration that “the study of places is one of the particular concerns of geography” (Relph, 1976, 1).<sup>12</sup> In his *Place and Placelessness*, Relph aims to “explore place as a phenomenon of the lived-world of our everyday experiences”, where, he does not “seek to describe particular places in detail, nor to develop theories or models or abstractions”. He attempts to address “the various ways in which places manifest themselves in our experiences or consciousness of the lived-world the lived-world”; he aims to illustrate “the distinctive and essential components of place and placelessness as they are expressed in landscapes” (Relph, 1976, 6-7).

To notice, Relph’s *Place and Placelessness* that blamed disciplines related with physical environment for the “lack of interest” on “place” is evaluated by Seamon as a turning point for the discussions of “place”. As Seamon suggests:

Since Relph's book, there has been a spate of popular and academic studies on the nature of place. In addition, thinkers from a broad range of conceptual perspectives--from positivist to neo-Marxist to poststructuralist--have drawn on the idea of place, though understanding it in different ways and using it for different theoretical ends (Seamon, 1996).

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<sup>11</sup> For the references that Relph mentions, see: D. Lyndon, et al., 1962, “Towards Making Places” *Landscape 12*, 3: 31-41; S. Gaudie, 1969, *Architecture: The Appreciation of the Arts I* (London: Oxford University Press); C. Norberg-Schulz, 1969, “Meaning in Architecture”, in C. Jencks, ed., 1969, *Meaning in Architecture* (London: The Cresset Press).

<sup>12</sup> Relph, 1976, 1. Writing at 1970s, Relph refers to the geographer-historian Strabo who wrote, in the first century A.D., about the missions of geographers, for the fact that “his brief comment remained until recently the most detailed statement on place in geography”. As he quotes from Strabo: “[S]ince different places exhibit different good and bad attributes, as also the advantages and inconveniences that result therefrom, some due to nature and some resulting from human design, the geographer should mention those which are due to nature, for they are permanent, whereas the adventitious attributes undergo changes. And also of the latter attributes he should indicate such as cannot persist and yet somehow possess a certain distinction and fame, which by enduring to later times make a work of man, even it no longer exists, a kind of natural attribute of a place.” Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, translated by R.L. Jones (London: Heinemann, 1917-1932), book II, chapter 5, section 17 in Relph, 1976, 1.

Turning back to the uninterest on “place”, from a point of view, the above mentioned little attempt is correlated to the idea of “spatial science”<sup>13</sup> that governed 1970s:

Proper *scientific* disciplines ... liked to generalize and make laws that could be applicable anywhere – not just in Southern California or the South of France. Thus spatial science was born and the concept of region was replaced by the concept of space as a central focus of human geography ... Within spatial science a place was simply a location (Cresswell, 2005, 19).

In relation to the idea of “spatial science”, as Escobar comments:

Since Plato, Western philosophy – often times with the help of theology and physics – has enshrined space as the absolute, unlimited and universal, while banning place to the realm of the particular, the limited, the local and the bound (Escobar, 2001, 143).<sup>14</sup>

That evaluation of “place” as a simple and limited “location” may be considered to trigger humanist geographers; as Cresswell puts, “the development of humanistic geography was, in part, a reaction to the new emphasis on space in spatial science” when “in the 1970s humanistic geographers began to develop notions of place which were every bit as universal and theoretically ambitious as approaches to space has been” (Cresswell, 2005, 19).

Within this framework, as is suggested by Holloway & Hubbard, humanistic geography came up with a consideration of “attachment of meaning” on the conceptualizations of place and this consideration posed that “making a place meaningful makes it *belong* to us in some way” (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 71). As Entrikin suggests on contemporary humanist geography’s reactionary attitude:

Contemporary humanism in geography emphasizes the study of meanings, values, goals, and purposes. Within this humanist perspective concepts of traditional significance in geography are given existential meanings. For example, place is defined as a center of meaning or a focus of human emotional attachment. The humanist approach is defined by its proponents in geography and in other human sciences as a reaction

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<sup>13</sup> As Entrikin suggests, “spatial science”, or “scientific geography” “can be quite broadly defined as an approach based upon empirical observation, public verifiability of conclusions, and the importance of isolating fact from value” (Entrikin, 1976, 616).

<sup>14</sup> Also quoted in Cresswell, 2005, 19.

against what they believe to be an overly objective, narrow, mechanistic and deterministic view of man presented in much of the contemporary research in the human sciences (Entrikin, 1976, 616).

Being opposed to “space”, “place” became a focus of humanist and local approaches.

As Puren *et al.* state:

The dimension of place experiences was particularly emphasized and that reinforced the idea of space as opposite to place. This inherently called for an alternative planning and design response to sites, based in a place-based approach instead of the mere making of spaces (Puren, *et al.*, 2006, 189).

Summarizing the rise of “place” as “a deep and complex part of our experience of the world”, Holloway & Hubbard comment further about the common attitudes in humanistic geography:

Humanistic geographers writing in the 1970s were thus very much concerned with refocusing geography’s attention on to place as a deep and complex part of our experience of the world. Suggesting that places as ‘objects’ can be examined in relation to our intentionality (how they are to be used or related to), they attempted to produce geographical knowledge which emphasized the ways in which places can have a great deal of meaning and significance for people. This new geographical knowledge hence contrasted with that generated via quantitative geography (by emphasizing place rather than abstract space) and also behavioural geography (by beginning to focus on unconscious phenomenological relationships with place rather than just on cognitively mediated perceptions of place) (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 72).

Spatial science with naturalistic approaches is criticized in the name of disregarding “the great richness and diversity of human experience – the wealth of things it means to be human” (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 68).<sup>15</sup> As the authors offer in the above mentioned quotation, this reactional approach of humanistic geographers coincided well with phenomenological attitudes. It is further stated that the humanist attitude in

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<sup>15</sup> In that respect, the authors quote from Pierce Lewis (1985, 468) in order to evoke a much more different description of a place which seems as enriched with human experience: “...love affair with those Michigan dunes ... [which] had everything to do with violent immediate sensations: the smell of October wind sweeping in from Lake Michigan, sun-hot sand that turned deliciously cool when your foot sunk in, the sharp sting of sand blown hard against bare legs ... One is meant to feel those landscapes, not analyse them” (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 68).

human geography got inspirations from philosophical enquiries, mainly with regard of phenomenology and existentialism, and that this was not a “return to the ideographic concerns with *particular* places that were central to human geography in the first half of the century” (Cresswell, 2005, 20). This may also be related with the conceptualisation of “place” as a way of understanding. As is stated by Cresswell:

Rather place was seen as a universal and transhistorical part of the human condition. It was not so much in places (in the world) that interested the humanists but ‘place’ as an idea, concept and way of being-in-the-world. (Cresswell, 2005, 20).

It may well be said that reference to phenomenology as an ideological basis constitutes an important turning point in humanist geography. In this context, Edward Relph and Yi Fu Tuan are referred to develop existential phenomenological attitudes in human geography (Cresswell, 2005, 20; and Entrikin, 1976, 615).<sup>16</sup> As Entrikin informs, the term “phenomenological” was firstly employed by Relph and Tuan in two articles published in *The Canadian Geographer* (Entrikin, 1976, 616-17).<sup>17</sup>

For Edward Relph, the human experience is the *sine qua non* of the understanding of the significance of a place for an individual. It is within this consideration that “insiderness”, as a term coined by Relph in order to rank one’s belonging to a place upon several levels, depends on the “intensity” of the human experience which defines place mostly (Relph, 1976). As Gussow quoted in Relph states: “The catalyst that converts any physical location – any environment if you will – into a place, is the

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<sup>16</sup> Yi Fu Tuan’s book *Topophilia* (1974) and *Space and Place* (1977) and Edward Relph’s *Place and Placelessness* (1979) are important in that respect, as is also mentioned by Cresswell.

<sup>17</sup> The two article mentioned by Entrikin are Yi-Fu Tuan’s “Geography, Phenomenology, and the Study of Human Nature,” (*Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 15 (1971): 181-92 and Edward Relph’s “An Inquiry into the Relations Between Phenomenology and Geography” (*Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 14 (1970): 193-201). Relph also defines his approach in his *Place and Placelessness* as a utilization of phenomenological methods, where he states that the “methods are used implicitly rather than as explicit frameworks for description and analysis, for it is not the methodologies that are important here but the phenomenon of place” (Relph, 1976, 7, footnote 2).

process of experiencing deeply. A Place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings” (Gussow, 1971? in Relph, 1976, 141-142).<sup>18</sup>

Coining the term “placelessness” into the discourse of “place” in various disciplines (including architecture as mentioned before), Relph is opposed to the idea of putting the two terms as two opposing themes or concepts; he believes that such an attitude carries the risk of becoming “rigid preconceptions and categories that can all too easily be imposed on particular settings” (Relph, 1976, 123).<sup>19</sup> For Relph, “placelessness” points out:

... both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude which does not acknowledge significance in places. It reaches back into the deepest levels of place, cutting roots, eroding symbols, replacing diversity with uniformity and experiential order with conceptual order” (Relph, 1976, 143).



**Figure 1:** “Place” and “placelessness” depicted in relation to Relph’s consideration

<sup>18</sup> A. Gussow, 1971?, *A Sense of Place* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth), 27 cited in Relph, 1976, 141-142.

<sup>19</sup> Within this respect Relph regards the conditioned attitudes towards thematic particularities relying on solely a style, a period, etc.; he is opposed to such a proposition that “past places were good, present placelessness is bad, therefore we should make places in the old way” (Relph, 1976, 123). In relation to place creation, he also states that he disregards the attitudes of “museumization” and “self-conscious return to the traditional ways of place making” (Relph, 1976, 145).

While the need of creating a sense of place is invoked by Relph; he, in every chance, mentions about the difficulty to put “precise solutions”, and it is within this respect that he criticizes the works that offers somehow a “mathematical procedure”; he emphasizes the importance of an “appreciation of the significance of place and the particular activities and local situations” (Relph, 1976, 146). While mentioning about that difficulty, in the conclusion of his *Place and Placelessness*, Relph questions the absolute consideration of “placelessness” as an inevitable situation in an attempt to portray the dichotomy of “place” and “placelessness”:

A deep human need exists for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and to allow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. If, on the other hand, we choose to respond to that need and to transcend placelessness, then the potential exists for the development of an environment in which places are for man, reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience. (Relph, 1976, 147).

### **2.1.2 Phenomenology and its Relevance to Conceptualizations of Place**

The foundations of geographical knowledge lie in the direct experiences and consciousness we have of the world we live in (Relph, 1976, 4).

As David Seamon, a phenomenological geographer in the field of architecture, “accepts” in the very beginning, “place” is a notion that is frequently and justly used by phenomenologists in conveying their approach to environment-behaviour research; “place”, together with “lifeworld”, is stated by Seamon to constitute importance in that respect:

These notions are significant for a phenomenological approach to environment-behaviour research because each refers to a phenomenon that, in its very constitution, holds people and world always together and also says much about the physical, spatial, and environmental aspects of human life and events (Seamon, 2000, 161).



This is prominent in the sense that “place” is very much founded in the phenomenology of the built environment and consequently, the discipline stands out to be influential on the theorizations of “place” (in both human geography and architecture). As Malpas also states, “it is perhaps within the phenomenological framework that the most extensive explorations of space and place (though the emphasis is often more on space as such) have been undertaken” (Malpas, 1999, 20, note:4).

Within this context, the study believes in the necessity of gathering an overview on the influence of phenomenology over human geography in a very rough sense through constituting what phenomenology, in the very simple means, meant for disciplines and/or theories that took “place” as key subject matter.

To accept at the very beginning, phenomenology and its relevance / transgression to other disciplines remains as a very wide topic to deal. However, it is believed within the limits of this thesis that an overall understanding to be made over specific instances depicting the core assumptions of the school of phenomenology may provide a broad area for further interpretations in the curricula of architectural education to set up an understanding of “place” as both an architectural and/or geographical input / object and a way of understanding. In that respect, at that moment, the thesis will try to evoke a basic understanding of (or at least a glance at) phenomenology together with a phenomenological approach’s some general assumptions.

To begin, phenomenology as formulated by the German mathematician and philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and his school is, in the very general sense, defined as “the study of human consciousness” (Mallgrave, 2005, 369). Architectural theorist Harry Francis Mallgrave extends this definition as:

the attempt to describe the relation of the subject (my consciousness of) with the objects of the world (appearances) as a complex experiential and interpretative process (Mallgrave, 2005, 369).

In relation to the human consciousness, “intentionality” which is defined as the “‘aboutness’ of human consciousness” constitutes one of the main keywords in phenomenology (Cresswell, 2005, 22). As Cresswell comments:

...we cannot (the phenomenologist would argue) be conscious without being conscious of something. Consciousness constructs a relation between the self and the world (Cresswell, 2005, 22).

As Seamon puts, “phenomenology is the interpretative study of human experience” that aims “to examine and clarify human situations, events, meanings, and experiences” (Seamon, 2000, 157). As Pollio, Henley, and Thompson cited in Seamon suggest, phenomenology aims to achieve “a rigorous description of human life as it is lived and reflected upon in all of its first-person concreteness, urgency and ambiguity” (Seamon, 2000, 157). “Lived experience” is, then, an important part of phenomenological conceptualizations.

Entrikin comments that there are some general attitudes in Husserlian phenomenology which is in pursuit of finding the essential characters of phenomena. As Entrikin puts, to gain the “essential insight or necessary knowledge of the world”, phenomenology gives importance to the “suspending preconceptions”:

Husserl and others following his thought are interested in developing a philosophical method which would allow the philosopher to get “back to things themselves.” That is, a method is sought which would allow one to isolate the essential aspects of objects of consciousness. This essential insight into the nature of objects of consciousness is obtained through a suspension of all preconceptions that an individual has about the nature of objects, such as those of a scientific, naturalistic, or common sense viewpoint. By suspending these preconceptions, phenomenologists hope to achieve a sort of radical doubt which would expose the underlying essential structures of knowledge of the world. After achieving insight into these essences, the phenomenologist describes this apodictic or necessary insight (Entrikin, 1976, 618).

Secondly, commenting on the methodology of the discipline, Entrikin suggests that phenomenology depends on the **description** of phenomena, rather than an **explanation** of them:

Phenomenologists describe, rather than explain, in that explanation is viewed as a construction and hence antithetical to the phenomenologist's attempt to "get back" to the meaning of the data of consciousness.

Phenomenology ... is a philosophy in search of the origins of knowledge or essences. The search for these essences is achieved through reflecting upon the data of consciousness. In this sense, phenomenology is a method and not a system of philosophy (EntriKin, 1976, 618).

EntriKin puts that "the humanist's attempt to describe objects of consciousness as they present themselves to consciousness" distinguishes phenomenological description from any scientific one, and necessarily, as not the case in scientific approaches, the phenomenological description does not include presuppositions (EntriKin, 1976, 631).<sup>20</sup>

Essence is another significant keyword in phenomenology. As is stated, "the attainment of essential insight is the goal of the phenomenology as the 'science of essences'" (EntriKin, 1976, 617). Bearing upon the work of Edmund Husserl, as EntriKin comments:

Concepts are the universal terms which have specific instances just as essences are the general "forms" or "ideas" which have "factual" instances. Essences are not concepts, however, because they precede the development of concepts; essences are discovered only in man's transcendental realm (EntriKin, 1976, 618).<sup>21</sup>

Commenting on the importance of "essence", as Cresswell suggests, for a phenomenologist, to explore the "essence" of a "place" is to ask "what makes a place a place":

An essence is what makes something what it is. So rather than asking what this place or that place is like, the phenomenological approach to

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<sup>20</sup> As EntriKin comments: "Phenomenologists describe all contents of consciousness before the presuppositions of common sense and the scientific attitude (assuming that scientific description contains presuppositions). The primary difficulty with this view, however, is whether or not such radical description is possible". "If humanists are not referring to a preconceptual and prelinguistic experience, it seems difficult to maintain that the humanist perspective is presuppositionless. Language systems contain certain presuppositions of culture" (EntriKin, 1976, 631).

<sup>21</sup> For the referred material of Husserl, see: Edmund Husserl, 1960, *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, trans. Dorian Cains), 71.

place asks what makes a place a place? What is it that the corner of a child's room shares with an urban garden or Kosovo? Clearly this is not an interest in the particular but a rather grand investigation of a central component of the human world (Cresswell, 2005, 20).

To put some general concerns, phenomenology is the “exploration and description of phenomena where *phenomena* refers to things or experiences as human beings experience them” and where descriptions are evaluated as a “groundstone” to “discover underlying commonalities that mark the essential core of the phenomenon” (Seamon, 2000, 158-9). “Groundstone”, as a keyword, attains importance here in the way that it emphasizes an enquiry that would be a way of understanding in itself. Defined as non-idiosyncratic by Seamon, a phenomenological enquiry attempts to remain away from before-hand assumptions (as in positivist sciences) and to understand the “essential nature of the phenomenon” through its “specific instances” as “it has presence and meaning in the concrete lives and experiences of human beings” (Seamon, 2000, 159). As is stated, phenomenologists “hope that these instances, in time, will point toward more general qualities and characteristics” (Seamon, 2000, 159).

Another general consideration in phenomenology relates to the assumptions about the relations between “people” and “place”, as the discipline deals with the person and her/his relations with the world. Within this context, Entrikin suggests that phenomenological insights that affected human geography and other disciplines by means of relationships between “people” and “place” proposed “two related dichotomies”: “the subject-object distinction and the fact-value distinction” (Entrikin, 1976, 625). As he states further:

These distinctions are related in that by viewing the world as separable into the objective world of things and the subjective world of the mind, one can then separate the knowledge of that objective world as factual knowledge, and the subjective elements as emotion, value and meaning. By viewing the world as a reciprocal relationship of subject and object in which neither can be effectively separated, the fact-value distinction becomes blurred. Thus one's goals, intentions, and purposes can never be

totally isolated from one's experience and knowledge of the world (Entrikin, 1976, 625).<sup>22</sup>

About the distinction of “subject” and “object”, as Seamon illustrates:

It is impossible to ask whether person makes world or world makes person because both exist always together and can only be correctly interpreted in terms of the holistic relationship, being-in-world (Seamon, 2000, 160).

As Seamon states, that relationship between person and world is not one that can be thought as a “subject-object” relation. For Seamon, “intentionality” is also a key concept here in that it appeals to the refusal of the above mentioned subject-object dichotomy; as is stated:

the argument that human experience and consciousness necessarily involve some aspect of the world as their object, which, reciprocally, provides the context for the meaning of experience and consciousness (Seamon, 2000, 161).

Here comes the famous phrase, “being-in-the-world” which denotes a deeply involvement in the world through “place”, as put by Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time*. As Cresswell states, Martin Heidegger's work had influenced much of the seminal works in human geography that put “place” as a main discussion area. “Dwelling” (*desien*) as “the very essence of existence” rises up in the philosophy of Heidegger (Cresswell, 2005, 21). In that respect, Heidegger's depiction of “a farmhouse in the Black Forest” creates reverberances in mind:

Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter in simple oneness into things, ordered the house. It places the farm on the wind sheltered slope looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and which, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbed and the ‘tree of the dead’ – for that is what they called a coffin there, the Totenbaum – and in this way it designed for the different generations

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<sup>22</sup> The two dichotomies point out the subject-object duality (as Husserl's opposition) and Heideggerian undissolvable unity of person and environment.

under one roof the character of their journey through time. A craft which itself sprung from dwelling, still uses its tools and frames as things, built the farmhouse (Heidegger, 1971, 166).

In relation to Heidegger's illustration, as Vycinas cited in Relph states (in relation to the notions of "care-taking" and "sparing"):

There, when a man built his home near a spring and facing south on a hillside protected from the raw winds, it was the earth itself which directed the construction of such a building; and man by being open to the demands of the earth was merely a responder. When he extended the roof far down past the wall of the house and gave it sufficient slope, he had taken into consideration the stormy winter skies and possible accumulations of snow on the roof. ... (Vycinas, 1961 in Relph, 1976, 39)<sup>23</sup>

In the consideration of "being-in-the-world" as the essence of "being", Heidegger's argument is summarized in the way that "people do not exist apart from the world but, rather, are intimately caught up in and immersed" (Cresswell, 2005, 24).<sup>24</sup> In that respect, the two (people and the world) can not be thought separately, as an immersed conception of person in the world seem to constitute a basic methodological assumption in the school of phenomenology.

To summarize some basic notions about phenomenology, as Hubbard and Holloway suggest, phenomenology can be seen as a methodology or an interpretative framework (a way of knowing); its main attitude that offers "the best way to find out about human relationships with the world" attempts "to use intensive form of description" (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, 70). As they comment:

Phenomenologists reject the naturalist scientific assumption that an underlying 'reality' can be studied and described independently of human experience. Instead, they suggest that our experience is *itself* an essential part of reality, and there is no separate 'real' world external to human experience (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, 70).

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<sup>23</sup> V. Vycinas, 1961, *Earth and Gods* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), 261.

<sup>24</sup> As Norberg-Schulz states, Heidegger's ideas stem from Husserl's manifest of "getting back into things", but "whereas Husserl understood things in terms of human consciousness, Heidegger really approached them as such, by investigating their being-in-the-world" (Norberg-Schulz, 1991, 95).

Furthermore, as stated, human experience is related with “the human subject’s intentionality towards objects”, “meaning a person’s intention to use or interact with objects”:

Phenomenologists aim to recover the moment of intentionality in order to strip away the accumulated layers of conscious meaning and conceptualization (including academic theorization) that hide the ‘true essences’ of the initial moments of encounter with phenomena (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, 70).

In these respects, a phenomenological approach can very broadly be conceptualized as describing the ‘true essences’. As is stated, such description “involves using human sensory relations with the world (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching)” together with “mental relations such as remembering, imagining and having emotions” (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, 70). “Intentionality” as a keyword makes sense for a phenomenological approach when one particular person (researcher, planner, architect, ...) aims to understand “place”. To note, the intentionality of the architect, in that respect, to her/his object of study may constitute importance in that respect.

## **2.2 Some Remarks on Phenomenologically Driven Humanist Geography**

So far, some of the written literature over discussions of “place” has been explored within the borders of humanist attitude in human geography that got inspirations from phenomenology as a guiding school of thought and the study has attempted to illustrate some basic assumptions in a phenomenological approach. Both to summarize and reconsider, some remarks on the issue will be due consideration at that moment.

Reviewing the works of foregoing humanist geographers, Entrikin signalizes the profound importance given to “intentions, goals, purposes, and values” and “the rejection of the abstraction and objectivity of science” as a generally driven idea

(Entrikin, 1976, 625). He, furthermore, depicts some other common characteristics coming into light within humanistic perspectives:

... 1) the lack of a clearly defined methodology; 2) the importance of nonempirical means of gaining knowledge such as intuition; and 3) the goal of ascertaining the structures or form of man's experience (in the geographic case the structure of man's experience of the geographical environment, of place, of region, etc.) (Entrikin, 1976, 625).

Having discussed the humanist attitude in geography in detail, Entrikin claims that "humanistic geography is best portrayed as a form of criticism", a condition which, in the author's opinion, does not necessarily point out a failure in humanist geographers' studies; its being a "form of criticism" may bring out some openings:

As criticism it provides a potentially useful function in reaffirming the importance of the study of meaning and value in human geography, making geographers aware of their often extreme interpretations of science, and making scientists aware of the social and cultural factors involved in so-called objective research. As criticism, however, the humanist perspective does not fulfill the role suggested by some of its proponents of providing the essential insight, or presuppositionless basis for, a scientific geography. Humanistic geography as criticism is one of a number of means by which geographers can be made more self-aware and cognizant of many of the hidden assumptions and implications of their methods and research (Entrikin, 1976, 631-2).

Though Entrikin's implication of humanist approach in geography as being a form of criticism is a consideration towards a whole discipline, careful attention may also be given in regard to issues concerning "place" and its study. Namely, Entrikin's notice on geographers to be "more self-aware and cognizant of the hidden assumptions and implications of their methods and research" (Entrikin, 1976, 632) by regarding humanist attitude as a form of criticism may well be appreciated in place-based approaches viewed within architecture's perspective.



## CHAPTER 3

### “PLACE” AND ARCHITECTURE, SOME WAYS OF THOUGHT

#### 3.1 The Genealogy of “Place” in Architecture

This section will mainly dwell on how architecture possessed “place” as its subject matter. The wide range of meanings apparent in the word is studied in relation to human geography and phenomenology so far. Remembering May’s connotations about the varying uses of “place” in human geography, the third definition as “to refer to a particular and specific part of space and to what may occupy that space, ‘as when we think of our place of residence as being a particular building or talk of a place of worship or a place of amusement’”, as mentioned before appeals much for the field of architecture (Relph, 1976, 3-4).<sup>25</sup> Here, the opposition of place in relation to space is announced once more. On the whole, as can be mentioned, the debates over the concept of “place” in architecture reveal the notion of “place creation” as a necessarily important issue. While the problem of “place creation” is not a new concept that emerged immediately after Modernist era, the transformations on the contemporary discourse on “place” in architecture are mainly dated to recent decades (Arefi, 1999, 179).

As Arefi states, modernity and globalization are considered to be the major influences on the transformations in the conception of “place”, covering the changes in its production as well as in its meaning (Arefi, 1999, 179). “The debate over the credibility and importance of place” is associated with two groups of scholars, differing in their attitude towards the conception of “place” in terms of their belief in either its demise or its necessity (Arefi, 1999, 179). While modernity and

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<sup>25</sup> See footnote 8.

globalization seems to be the primary factors in the rise of the conception of “place”, the relevance of some parallel developments in critical thought that transgressed into architecture should also be noted.

“Place” is a critical term, especially in architecture. It has been mentioned that the theories over the word are developed upon debates over its “credibility and importance”. First of all, in that respect, the conception of “place” in its relation to and with the integration of “space” (and “time”) within the discipline of architecture will be due to the consideration of this thesis, and then the study will attempt to deal with the conceptualizations of “place” through “actions and reactions” present in the literature.

### **3.1.1 History of Spaces**

“(Social) space is a (social) product” says French sociologist and thinker Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991); in his book, “The Production of Space”, where he exclusively studies the concept of “space”. “The Production of Space” includes the issue of space both theoretically and historically (Grönlund). At the very first hand, Lefebvre is given reference by most of the scholars for his search for “a unitary theory of physical, mental, and social space” among the multiplicity of the uses of space through history (Grönlund).

According to Lefebvre, “social space” is the one that is crucial space, and both “physical space” and “mental space” should be seen in relation to “social space” (Grönlund). At another level, social space can be thought to be the primary medium for the evaluation of the terms “ideology”, “state”, “commodity”, “money”, “value” and “class struggle” (Ross, 1999). About the meaning of space or “*l’espace*”, Shields comments that it contributes to “the spatialization of social order” (Shields, 1988). The space as “spatialization of social order” is investigated by means of “a history of space” which constitutes the main outline for Lefebvre’s theory of space in history and in architecture as well. For Lefebvre, “a history of space” should dialectically

focus on the “production of space”, rather than the “space” as a product itself (Lefebvre, 1991, 46-7). In that manner, “the production of space” is studied through periods and transformations in modes of production.

“Moments” constitute a crucial importance for Lefebvre. As Harvey summarizes, moments are conceived by Lefebvre as “points of rupture, of radical recognition of possibilities and intense euphoria” (Harvey, 1991, 429-30). Also defined as “revelatory of the total, radical, sometimes revolutionary possibilities latent in everyday life”, moments are advanced for the constitution of “history of spaces” (Hays, 1998, 175-6). In that respect, Lefebvre’s three “moments” will be depicted in the scope of this study.

The time around “1910s” as associated with a new conception of space constitutes “a crucial moment” for Lefebvre, as can be seen in his sayings:

The fact is that around 1910 a certain space was shattered. It was the space of common sense, of knowledge (*savoir*), of social practice, of political power, a space thitherto enshrined in everyday discourse, just as in abstract thought, as the environment of and channel for communications (Lefebvre, 1991, 25).

As Lefebvre further states:

Euclidean and perspectivist space have disappeared as systems of reference, along with other former ‘commonplaces’ such as the town, history, paternity, the tonal system in music, traditional morality, and so forth. This was truly a crucial moment (Lefebvre, 1991, 25).

Being an outcome of the works of some artists and architects who were later related with the mission of Bauhaus, this new space is correlated with “the moment of emergence of an awareness of space and its production” when “the artist passed from objects in space to the concept of space itself” (Lefebvre, 1991, 123-5). “The new space of modernity” is, as summarized by Michael Hays, associated with “imperialism, social revolution, a world market, and the explosion of the historical city” (Hays, 1998, 175). This moment also corresponds to the rise of what Lefebvre calls “abstract space”. This space, which coincides with capitalism is also

“contradictory space” that is characterized by “paradoxes and contradictions”, even “in the face of the homogenization and unification of space under capital” (Shields, 1988). This space is contingent with Lefebvre’s thoughts on what Bauhaus created as the new space, which Lefebvre describes as “the worldwide, homogeneous and monotonous architecture of the state whether capitalist or socialist” (Lefebvre, 1991, 126).

The time around “1950s” finds its relevance as a moment when “the process of global urbanization of society” rose and the transformation of social life accelerated seriously (Hays, 1998, 175). For that moment, the effacement of the distinctions between “city and country”, “center and periphery”, “industry and agriculture” and “commodity and art” are due to consideration (Hays, 1998, 175).

The time around “1968” corresponds to another moment through the emergence of a “new praxis” of urbanism in abstract space (Hays, 1998, 175). In that new praxis, as Lefebvre states, “the term ‘political’ is restored to its oldest meaning – theoretical and practical knowledge of the social life in the community” (Lefebvre, 1969, 155 in Hays, 1998, 175).<sup>26</sup>

Architectural theorist Vittorio Gregotti investigates the history of architecture through similar moments, but he mainly bases his thoughts on the differing “internationalisms” lived in historical periods. Gregotti informs about the time around 1910s upon the two implications of internationalism as proposed by avant-gardes. At one hand internationalism “contributed to polemic against nationalisms in the name of art as an absolute, nominative expression that took the form of geometric abstraction and analytical reason”; and on the other hand, it was “based on the idea of novelty and utopia as values”, and “on the construction, in the name of technique and progress, of a language for a classless society where the essence of a problem was the basis for its expression” (Gregotti, 1996, 75). Around 1950s, as Gregotti proposes,

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<sup>26</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Revolution*, trans. Alfred Ehrenfeld (New York: Monthly Review Pres, 1969), 155 cited in Hays, 1998, 175.

internationalism reappeared with the concepts of “division of labor and specialization of production” and “value of objectivity and technique and formalization of thought” in a “neotechnical” and “neopositivist” character dominated by North American thought (Gregotti, 1996, 75). For the current time, Gregotti defines another type of internationalism that would be differing from the past ones. As he comments:

The internationalism that we experience today is different. As is often stated, it represents an internationalism of nonmaterial financial currents, of scientific and technical information, and of mass communication, with their respective laws of behaviour and consumption (Gregotti, 1996, 76).

Since the emergence of the “crucial moment” within the new conception of space of “social practice” or more explicitly “social space”, the production of space gained new mediums through certain agents. For Gregotti, capitalism, technology and mass communication are the primary factors that affected the theory of architecture. For Lefebvre, it is the capitalism and its mode of production that controls the spatial practice. As Shield states; for Lefebvre, “the production of an appropriate system of spatial attitudes, habits and territorial divisions has been essential to the survival of Capitalism” (Shields, 1988).

Expressing the spirit of time explicitly; architectural historian and theoretician Claude Schnaidt, in his essay “Architecture and Political Commitment” of 1967, writes on how “neo-capitalist” society as a social system ruled architecture:

In the days when the pioneers of modern architecture were young, they thought like William Morris that architecture should be an “art of the people for the people”. Instead of pandering to the tastes of the privileged few, they wanted to satisfy the requirements of the community. They wanted to build dwellings, matched to human needs, to erect a Cité Radieuse. But they had reckoned without the commercial instincts of the bourgeoisie who lost no time in arrogating their theories to themselves and pressing them into service for the purposes of money-making. (Schnaidt, 1967, 26-34 in Frampton, 1982, 27)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Claude Schnaidt, “Architecture and Political Commitment,” *UIM: Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Gestaltung*, n. 19-20, August 1967, 26-34 cited in Frampton, 1982, 27.

About the ideology of architecture in 1950s, Schnaidt further comments:

Utility quickly became synonymous with profitability. Anti-academic forms became the new décor of the ruling classes. The rational dwelling was transformed into the minimum dwelling, the Cité Radieuse into the urban conglomeration and austerity of line into poverty of form. The architects of the trade unions, co-operatives, and socialist municipalities were enlisted in the service of the whisky distillers, detergent manufacturers, the bankers, and the Vatican. Modern architecture, which wanted to play its part in the liberation of mankind by creating a new environment to live in, was transformed into a giant enterprise for the degradation of the human habitat (Schnaidt, 1967, 26-34 in Frampton, 1982, 27).<sup>28</sup>

While the quoted paragraphs express the ideology of 1910s and 1950s, this transformation of modern architecture into “a giant enterprise for the degradation of the human habitat” stands as an important reference to understand the current “new internationalism” as mentioned above. The above mentioned periods of transformations by means of changes in production modes which reorganized the spatial practice, and thus architecture, found its consequences through further actions and reactions. In that respect, it would be the time for looking into the theory of “place” in architecture by means of actions and reactions.

### **3.1.2 Actions and Reactions: A Look over Conceptualizations of “Place” in Architecture**

To build, to plant, whatever you intend,  
To rear the Column or the Arch to bend,  
To swell the Terras or to sink the Grot;  
In all, let Nature never be forgot.  
Consult the Genius of the Place in all ...

Alexander Pope<sup>29</sup>

As was mentioned before, “place” is a reactional term, especially in architecture and within this context, the thesis attempts to answer – or at least “ask question of” – how

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<sup>28</sup> Claude Schnaidt, “Architecture and Political Commitment,” *UIM: Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Gestaltung*, n. 19-20, August 1967, 26-34 cited in Frampton, 1982, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Pope’s *Epistle to Lord Burlington* (1731) cited in Thompson, 2003, 67.

architecture possessed “place” as its subject term. As was stated in the introduction of this chapter, modernity and globalization seems to be the primary factors in the rise of the conception of “place”, but the relevance of some parallel developments in critical thought that transgressed into the field of architecture should also be noted.

Besides dwelling on discussions that took “place” as subject matter in architecture, it is believed that theorizations on the idea of physical location/condition in architecture should also be studied as words indicating physical location/condition vary and are used interchangeably. Within that respect, firstly, some other terms that are considered to be in close relation to “place” will be overviewed and then the discussions over “place” will be of concern.

### **3.1.2.1 On the Idea of Physical Location/Condition in Architecture**

Within architectural discourse, there are terms that are used interchangeably (or not) to depict physical location/condition. Apart from “place” as the subject and object matter of this thesis, terms like “site”, “context”, “ground”, “setting”, “property”, “situation” are mentioned by Burns & Kahn to be constituting the “different aspects of physical condition” (Burns & Kahn, 2005, viii-xxiv). While there may exist an ambiguity in the utilization of these terms to indicate exact definitions or differentiations within, it is important to, at least, have an idea about some general considerations. Within that context, in order to gain an insight to the discourse of place in architecture, some of the parallel terms used to indicate physical location/condition will be briefly introduced as these terms seem to be in close relation with each other.

#### **3.1.2.1.1 Site**

Certainly, “site” is an important related term in considerations of “place” in architecture’s agenda of building physical environments. With the dictionary meanings of (1) “the position or location of a town, building, etc., esp. as to its

environment”<sup>30</sup> and (2) “the area or exact plot of ground on which anything is, has been, or is to be located”<sup>31</sup>, the word appeals to the physical “ground” or “location”, constituting the “material setting” of “place”.

Apart from the dictionary definitions, theorizations made upon the word also matters. The book *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies*, edited by Burns and Kahn, deals with the conceptualization of “site” in design related disciplines. The book studies “how sites are engaged by, and conceptualized through, design” and aims “to lay out what we think site means, and to explore how these meanings inform thinking about specific sites as places for design action” (Burns & Kahn, 2005, x). At the beginning of the book, the authors attempt to acknowledge the necessity of the consideration of “site” via design of built environments.<sup>32</sup> The question, “Why site matters?” is asked in reaction to the “striking omission” of the word in conceptualizations of theory and practice of design, as the authors put:

For the disciplines and professions concerned with design of the physical environment, site matters. Not only are physical design projects always located in a specific place, the work of physical design also necessarily depends on notional understandings about the relationships between a project and a locale. Given that design reconfigures the environment using physical and conceptual means, articulate comprehension of site in physical and conceptual terms should be fundamental. Surprisingly, however, the design field overall has scanty literature directly addressing the subject. This is a striking omission (...) (Burns & Kahn, 2005, viii).

Being that “material setting” of “place”, “site” is where certain things or activities are located. As Burns & Kahn put, “each specialized area of physical design – architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and urban planning – nevertheless construes the location of its activities and practices overtly and tacitly though its normative approaches” (Burns & Kahn, 2005, viii).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com>, accessed on 16.05.08.

<sup>31</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com>, accessed on 16.05.08.

<sup>32</sup> While considered in this thesis as a place-related term, in this book, “site” is referred to as a central term the idea of which “might embrace” the other terms mentioned to indicate physical location/condition.

<sup>33</sup> As the authors claim, “architecture’s traditional focus on buildings has led to tacit focus on the lot as the ground for design intervention” (Burns & Kahn, 2005, viii).



That above mentioned “surprising omission” of the considerations of “site” in design practices is an important topic to dwell on, as it draws attention to the rather “untouched” tangibility of “place” as a working term in architecture’s agenda. While mentioning that rather untouched nature of “site” as a subject matter in the design of physical environments in 2005, Burns & Kahn refer also to the notice made by Amos Rapoport in 1969: “I am not certain that any consistent theory of site as a form determinant has ever been proposed” (Rapoport, 1969, 28 in Burns& Kahn, 2005, ix).<sup>34</sup> This situation is further related to the theorizations of architecture which, as the authors claim, “has become evermore disassociated from the consideration of physical conditions, veering toward a progressively abstract array of concerns” (Burns & Kahn, 2005, ix).

On the other hand, Lynch’s book “Site Planning” of 1984 is an attempt to define “site” as the physical environment for the activity of “planning”. For Lynch, site planning carries the charge of “making places that fit human purposes” and within this consideration, two issues are of his concern: “the nature of the site, and how its users will act in it and value it” (Lynch, 1984, 67). The “site” and “purpose”, as the author mentions are “the two sources of site design” (Lynch, 1984, 29). “Site” is in this respect studied through “systematic data collection” where a much more scientific understanding of site characteristics is due to the author’s concern.<sup>35</sup> As Lynch suggests:

Every site, natural or man-made, is to some degree unique, a connected web of things and activities. That web imposes limitations and offers possibilities. Any plan, however radical, maintains some continuity with the preexisting locale. Understanding a locality demands time and effort. The skilled site planner suffers a constant anxiety about the “spirit of place” (Lynch, 1984, 29).

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<sup>34</sup> Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 28 quoted in Burns & Kahn, 2005, ix.

<sup>35</sup> Lynch mentions about the notions of “site identity and change”, “ecology”, “behavior”, “soil”, “water table”, etc., within this respect.

### 3.1.2.1.2 Context

“Context”<sup>36</sup> is another term that may be considered as being in close relation to “place”. While noting its rather little recognition in architectural theory, Isenstadt states that “context takes its place in a spectrum of terms concerned with perception of place and the creation of placefulness” (Isenstadt, 2005, 160). Within this frame, seeming to be included within the discourse of architecture nearly at the same times with “place”, context may provide further notes on “place”. In other words, theorizations and debates on “context” may depict a parallel way of thought in understanding the itinerary of “place” as a concept in architecture.

Before having a look at the theorizations and debates on “context”, firstly, to ask what “context” contains is important. As Isenstadt puts, “context” depicts “the whole set of conditions from which an architect will construct an idea of site suitable to a specific scheme” (Isenstadt, 2005, 157).<sup>37</sup> The “context” then includes both the physical (“technological”, as the author puts) properties and other aspects “that mediate any conception of what is unique and local at a site with images from other places” (Isenstadt, 2005, 157). Within this framework, context is also a contested term with complexities. As Isenstadt puts:

The concept of context is hard to pin down because it always points to surrounding circumstances; context is the crucible in which buildings happen. Complicating this, *context* is at once general and a specialized, disciplinary term. The same word appears prominently in two dissimilar realms: a common, casual usage where it can signify a set of immediate general conditions that help situate meanings, and a narrower professional field, where it evokes both current debate and a history still fresh from the 1970s. But, insofar as architecture is part of everyday life, these usages blend (Isenstadt, 2005, 157).

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<sup>36</sup> As Sandy Isenstadt informs about the etymology of the word: “The word intensifies the act of joining, with *con* meaning together, and *text*, from the Latin *texere*, meaning to join, or weave. The Indo-European root *teks* also means to weave, as in wicker, or to make wattle, for wattle-and-daub structures. The person who makes wattle is called the *tekson*, or *tekton* in Greek, from which we get *tectonic*, and the master of all things tectonic is the *arch-tekton*, or *architect*” (Isenstadt, 2005, 160).

<sup>37</sup> Isenstadt evaluates context as “a factor in the understanding of site”.

The complexities come from the meanings/definitions that “context” offers; as the author claims in the above mentioned quotation, context refers to both what site offers as general “conditions” and to what is “there” at the moment historically and theoretically. As mentioned, “because context can refer just as easily to surrounding fabric as to widespread attitudes, or even to debates regarding physical fabric, the same term ranges in meaning from built form to implied meaning to underlying ideology” (Isenstadt, 2005, 158).

The role of the intention of the architect is also due consideration; Isenstadt considers that “flexibility”, related to the intentions of the architect, constitutes “the basis for the term’s disciplinary specialization”:

As often as not, an architect’s description of an existing context will soon underpin a subsequent series of decisions to intervene in that context. A characterization of context smuggles into the design process a set of confirming values camouflaged as a description of existing conditions and observed facts; the details of any description of context will usually indicate whether the speaker aims to respect or reject it. Dressed as an inventory of what is here now, the architect’s analysis of context is often a preliminary step in the struggle for what will come next (Isenstadt, 2005, 158).

As mentioned before, because of being intimately related to the idea of “place making” or “the creation of placefulness”, the theorizations of “context” seeming to be in close relation to that of “place” occurred as the outcome of a movement of reaction. As is claimed, the issue of “context” as a design problem gained relevance in reaction to modernist attitudes in architecture:

As a defining issue for architecture, context, it turns out, appears only recently – during the 1950s and 1960s. After being irrelevant as an issue for most of architectural history, context came suddenly to occupy a prominent place in architectural discourse, becoming a historical problem for architecture in response to the collapse of a more or less coherent program of modernism. The issue of context arises as a consequence of the critique of modern architecture (Isenstadt, 2005, 160).

The era of modernism is not solely represented as a focus where “thinking about context” was played down. Apart from the crucial changes in the mode of production

that was discussed before through the history of spaces to appeal to the reactionary landscape of the era, the conceptualizations of “context” mostly derives its cognizance for its being “a historical problem for architecture” (Isenstadt, 2005, 160). It was nearly at the times of the place-based approaches of 1960s, when “context” became an affair of discussion in the CIAM meetings where “historic city centers” were the main subject-matter (Isenstadt, 2005, 161). Robert Venturi is also referred to in this respect for his master’s thesis, “Context in Architectural Compositions” of 1950, where he discussed the term’s possible expansions in architecture (Isenstadt, 2005, 161).

The School of Venice, and hence the Neo-rationalists, are mostly given reference for their historical and morphological interpretations of urban context. Ockman uses the phrase, “the new urban dimension” in Italy, which gained relevance in reaction to the urban changes in historic city centers (Ockman, 1993, 399). Nesbitt defines the School of Venice, or the “Architectural Institute of the University of Venice” as provided with the intention of criticizing modernism and modernization in search of “the social roles of architecture” (Nesbitt, 1996, 338).

Rossi’s “Architecture of the City” deals with the issues of morphological types. His book is stated to convey “the cultural and geographical specificity of urban place” (Ockman, 1993, 399). Rossi mostly uses the term “*locus*” to indicate the “relationship between a certain specific location and the buildings that are in it” (Rossi, 1982, 103).<sup>38</sup> For Rossi, the understanding of that “*locus*” may be developed through the study of “the physical analysis of artifacts and their surroundings” - namely “the value of images” and this study may be enhanced within a “rational” expression (Rossi, 1982, 103). On the whole, Rossi’s work, together with that of Krier, is suggested as attempts for the creation of a sense of “place” through the construction

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<sup>38</sup> Reviewing the works of some geographers and thinkers, Rossi evaluates the “*locus*” as a concept adhering to “a unique and particular place” which also betrays the “conditions” and “qualities” for the apprehension of “an urban artifact” (Rossi, 1982, 103).

of public urban space (Aravot, 2002, 202).<sup>39</sup> Gregotti, also positioned in the School of Venice, defines the task of the architect as “to create an architecture of context”; urban morphology is important for him, but differing from Rossi, Krier and others, he underscores the detection of “nature” through “modification, measurement and utilization of the landscape” (Nesbitt, 1996, 338).<sup>40</sup> He is embedded more in the territorial scale (Ockman, 1993, 399). Site, then, becomes crucial.

The physical spirit of history is the built environment which surrounds us, the manner of its transformation into visible things, its gathering of depths and meanings which differ not only because of what the environment appears to be, but also because of what it *is* structurally. The environment is composed of the traces of its own history. If geography is therefore the way in which the signs of history solidify and are superimposed in a form, the architectural project has the task of drawing attention to the essence of the environmental context through the transformation of form (Gregotti, 1985, 340).

The project, then, must be established upon the regulating tradition of style and *métier*. But what gives architectural truth and concreteness to this tradition is its meeting with the site, for only by perceiving the site as a specific environment can those exceptions which generate architecture emerge (Gregotti, 1985, 342).

Gregotti added two important ideas to the neo-rationalist movement: “place” and “genius loci” (Nesbitt, 1996, 338).<sup>41</sup> Gregotti’s position, which will be considered once again later, is different than other urban designers due to the fact that he accomplishes a phenomenologically gathered vision in relation “place” and “*genius loci*” in his theories and practices. As Gregotti puts, “the organisation of space (...) starts from the idea of *place*: the project transforms *place* into *settlement*” (Gregotti, 1996, 42).

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<sup>39</sup> See A. Rossi, 1982, *Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) (originally published in Italian in 1966); R. Krier, 1979, *Urban Space* (New York: Rizzoli).

<sup>40</sup> Gregotti’s understanding of “site” is correlated to the tectonic approach of “constructed site”, coined by C. Burns, as will be mentioned later (Nesbitt, 1996, 339).

<sup>41</sup> “*Genius loci*” as a Roman concept indicating the “spirit of a place” will be surrogated in the following sections where the study gives reference to Norberg-Schulz who mostly uses the term for his conceptualizations of place in architecture.

Architectural researcher and activist Jane Jacobs' criticisms about the postwar architectural tendencies depict another reactionary scene about "context". The "superscale high-rise apartment blocks" (that of reminding Le Corbusier) attempted to be disposed on the city triggers Jacobs, as Ockman informs (Ockman, 1993, 338). Jacobs' critique mostly dwells on the unsafe and non-civic environments of the postwar era, which she illustrates in relation to the "lovely" streets of her neighbourhood that is observed in real everyday life; as Jacobs states:

[...] There is a wistful myth that if only we had enough money to spend – the figure is usually put at a hundred billion dollars – we could wipe out all our slums in ten years, reverse decay in the great, dull, gray belts that were yesterday's and day-before-yesterday's suburbs, anchor the wandering middle class and its wandering tax money, and perhaps even solve the traffic problem.

But look what we have built with the first several billions: Low-income projects that become worse centers of delinquency, vandalism, and general social hopelessness than the slums they were supposed to replace. Middle-income housing projects which are truly marvels dullness and regimentation, sealed against any buoyancy or vitality of city life. Luxury housing projects that mitigate their inanity, or try to, with a vapid vulgarity. Cultural centers that are unable to support a good book store. Civic centers that are avoided by everyone but bums, who have fewer choices of loitering place than others. Commercial centers that are lackluster imitations of standardized suburban chain-store shopping. Promenades that go from no place to nowhere and have no promenaders. Expressways that eviscerate great cities. This is not the rebuilding of cities. This is the sacking of cities (Jacobs, 1961, 339).

Jacobs' critique is also due to concern in relation to the reverberances it created upon mass media. The wide recognition of the book that embeds architecture in real life shows us how community can be drawn into an awareness of the architectural environment.

The establishment of urban design programs is another sphere in relation to the issue of context. It is stated that the concept of "urban design" was also introduced at the 1970s. Relying on the RIBA definition of its major characteristic as "the arrangement

of the physical objects and human activities”<sup>42</sup>, Aravot states that the differing approaches of 1950s towards the comprehension of “specific situations and circumstances” provided the foundation of “urban design” (Aravot, 2002, 201). The specificities or particularities of places – it may be said – came into prominence in an attempt “to give people back that which modernist sterility, abstraction, mechanistic, redundancy, uniformity and minimalism had taken from them” through “the intention to re-establish quality of "place in the public realm” (Aravot, 2002, 201).

Sense of place, which is the desired result of placemaking, was regarded as a human need, essential for well being and feelings of safety, security and orientation, and a remedy against feelings of alienation and estrangement (Aravot, 2002, 202).

Contextualism is another paradigm that gained importance since 1960s. Contextualism is mostly defined in relation to Rowe’s and Koetter’s “Collage City” of 1975 though the study does not include the word in the text. The study includes design strategies for the design and understanding of the urban character. In a research carried out by the students of the authors from Cornell University, analysing the urban through the “figure ground plan”, the modernist approaches’ overrating of “the object building” is criticized due to the resulting character of the public open spaces (Nesbitt, 1996, 266). Apart from this critique, the idea of “collage” is introduced by Rowe as “a means of accomodating emancipation and allowing all parts of a pluralist situation their own legitimate expression” (Rowe, 1981 in Nesbitt, 1996, 267).<sup>43</sup>

Kevin Lynch’s “Image of the City” (1960) is, in the very general sense, a psychological and empirical study concerning the urban form. It concerns the orientation of the people on the earth that may get meaning in relation to the notions of path, edge, node, district, and landmark. It can be said that Lynch’s consideration

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<sup>42</sup> RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) report (Gosling & Maitland, 1984, p. 7), cited in Aravot, 2002, 201.

<sup>43</sup> Colin Rowe, “The Present Urban Predicament,” *Cornell Journal of Architecture 1* (1981): 17, 18 quoted in Nesbitt, 1996, 267.

upon the “environmental image” that can enhance one’s orientation in the city influenced many ones dealing with the theorizations of “place”, including the work of Norberg-Schulz and Gregotti.

On the whole, it can be said that the debates on “context” in the form of attempts to redress the lack of historical attention were both part of the reactional movement depicted by the place-based approaches in 1960s, and somehow the agent that fired the reactions. Apart from concerns related with history, some of the above mentioned actions and reactions applied also to the notions of people’s relations with each other and environment, people’s perception, ... and alike. Within the reactional movement that “place” governed, a number of approaches showing a plurality were established by various thinkers.

### **3.1.2.2 “Place Matters”: Phenomenological Discourse in Discussions of “Place” in Architecture**

As was quoted before, “the debate over the credibility and importance of place” is associated with two groups of scholars, differing in their attitude towards the conception of “place” in terms of their belief in either its demise or its necessity (Arefi, 1999, 179). Those who believed in the necessity of “place” creation in architecture constitute a variety in themselves as they were surrounded with the plurality-oriented reactional movement towards the homogeneous ideals of modernism. However, they had some common points as they were affected by the theory of critical thought of 1950s and 1960s. As Mallgrave puts deliberately, it was at these times, “when various attempts were made to provide design with a more rigorous or critical apparatus” and when ways of thoughts from other disciplines transgressed into architecture’s discursive structure (Mallgrave, 2005, 369).

Beyond “abstract disciplines” which had impacts on architectural theory, such as “poststructuralism” and “semiotics”; “phenomenology” is considered by Mallgrave as being the first of the other disciplines that entered into architectural discourse



(Mallgrave, 2005, 369). The emergence of place-based approaches in the field of architecture which was strongly affected by phenomenology is consequently met at these times (Curry, 2002). What phenomenology proposed for the discipline of architecture merits to be considered in that respect.

The relevance of phenomenology in various conceptualizations of “place” utilized in other disciplines (mainly human geography) was discussed before. Like those writing on “place” within human geography, thinkers of “place” within the framework of architecture were mostly driven by inspirations from phenomenology and existentialism. In parallel, we shall note about the relevance of the idea of “humanism” which is considered by de Solà Morales as “the ultimate referential grounding for the dominant system of values in the new European architectural scene of the fifties” (de Solà Morales, 1997, 48).<sup>44</sup>

In that respect, it may be said that being related with the understanding of human conditions and experiences, phenomenology had consequential impacts in place-based approaches in architecture. Within this context, philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) are cited for their contributions to phenomenology through architecture (Mallgrave, 2005, 370). Within our frame, Heidegger’s impact on the theory of architecture which affected many of the place-based approaches will be given further consideration as in the previous chapters the thesis has gathered insights about phenomenology mainly upon his theorizations.

As de Solà Morales suggests about Heidegger’s influence on architects:

Heidegger’s text overflows with references to construction and architecture: the Heidelberg bridge, the German *Autobahn*, his own house in the Black Forest. In the same way, his reflections on the dwelling space lean in the direction of both the radical and the fundamental. Following from Husserl’s critique of abstract Cartesian space, Heidegger links the

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<sup>44</sup> The author mentions about the word’s “synthesizing capacity within the existentialist climate in favor of the actual human subject, taking into account his or her actual experience, angst, and lived knowledge of specific space and time”.

essence of spatiality to the experience of the subject who is in the world. The space of dwelling is not a geometrical but an existential one, resulting from our phenomenological perception of place. Its construction is grounded in experience. As in so many of Heidegger's texts, this reflection on dwelling is an indictment of technical civilization and its loss of authenticity; it serves as an appeal to those who have the task in hand to think of the house as the response to the essential need for a rooted, constitutive dwelling, and a rejection of quantitative and inessential habitation (de Solà Morales, 1997, 47-8).

Announcing his conceptions at postwar time when "young architects" were highly "committed to a revision of modernism's mechanized urban and architectural production" (de Solà Morales, 1997, 48), Heidegger became a significant reference to theoreticians and architects.

In relation to the reactional scene of the era, the main argument of Heideggerian phenomenology in the field of architecture is suggested to be based on the fact that architecture "cannot be objectified into a set of abstract rational principles, such as utility, efficiency, economy, or functionality" and that architecture is related with "constituting the world and giving meaning to our lives" (Mallgrave, 2005, 370). This argument, going well within the reactional movement against the Cartesian world mentioned in the previous chapters, affected most of the place-based approaches in the discipline of architecture. As Ignasi de Solà Morales states:

Diffuse existentialism and the particularly determining influences of Martin Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty critically inflected the ideas of the modern movement by means of conceptual shifts that initially appeared to be imbued with the radical changes developed in the architectonic culture of the 1950s and 1960s (de Solà Morales, 1997, 98).

Christian Norberg-Schulz is given reference in that respect to portray that positioning against modern movement. As Norberg-Schulz comments about the necessity of a phenomenological insight in the field of architecture as a reaction against scientific, Cartesian world:

After decades of abstract, "scientific" theory, it is urgent that we return to a qualitative, phenomenological understanding of architecture. It does not help much to solve practical problems as long as this understanding is lacking (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5-6).

As de Solà Morales mentions, “from his now remote *Intentions* of 1963 to his significantly titled book *Genius Loci* of 1979, Norberg-Schulz’s work extended Heidegger’s inspiration” (de Solà Morales, 1997, 98). On the whole, Christian Norberg-Schulz is cited as one of the foremost architectural theorists who referred to Heidegger for the term “*genius loci*” and generally for the theory of creating meaningful places (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5).<sup>45</sup> Within this frame, “*genius loci*” or “the spirit of a particular place” which has constructed an influential argument for the discussions on “place” needs to be overviewed.

Before dealing with the referential characteristic of “*genius loci*” as a key term in mostly Norberg-Schulz agenda, we shall also mention about another source than Heidegger who affected place-based approaches, that of mainly Norberg-Schulz. To note about Louis Kahn gains importance here. Norberg-Schulz begins his discussion of “*genius loci*” with the famous quotation from Kahn, as “What does the building want to be?”<sup>46</sup>. In his recent writings, Norberg-Schulz credits the work of Kahn as a “fundamental contribution” and defines him as the one “who more than anybody else reconquered the phenomenological understanding of architecture” “even at a time when the ‘crisis’ of Modernism came forth, that is, about 1960” (Norberg-Schulz, 1991, 95).<sup>47</sup>

### 3.1.2.2.1 “Place” in Reference to “*Genius Loci*”

“*Genius loci*” is an influential argument that was introduced to architecture in the name of creating meaningful places via phenomenological insight. The concept

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<sup>45</sup> Norberg-Schulz cites “the philosophy of Heidegger” as “the catalyst” to his book, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5). Ian Thompson regards Norberg-Schulz’s work of 1979 as a reference that “made the *genius loci* into a cornerstone of his architectural phenomenology” (Thompson, 2003, 67).

<sup>46</sup> Louis Kahn quoted in Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Norberg-Schulz suggests that Kahn’s questions enhance the conception of “being-in-the-world” that reminds an architecture free of “intended ideal form” or “meaningless deconstruction” (Norberg-Schulz, 1991, 95). In his article, “Kahn, Heidegger and the Language of Architecture” in *Oppositions* 18, Cambridge, Mass., 1980, the author correlates Kahn’s and Heidegger’s notions for a common ground.

taking its power from its being a “source” for the enhancement of “meaningfulness”, is a frequently referred term in place-based approaches in disciplines missioned to build physical environments. As landscape designer Catherine Howett states, “the root meaning of this term posits a living, indwelling spiritual presence or energy in a particular place that is antecedent to human awareness and responsive place-making” (Howett, 1993, 69). Thompson further informs on the historical background of the term:

*Genius loci* is an ancient and persistent idea. The Romans believed that places, like people, had inner spirits that determined their essences. Just as they thought it was possible to read a person’s character or spirit from observing the particularities of his or her face, so the genius of a place could be divined by paying attention to its individual features. This was a variety of animism, and similar cultures may be found in many cultures (Thompson, 2003, 67).

Norberg-Schulz develops his considerations about *genius loci* over this Roman concept according to which “every ‘independent’ being has its genius, its guardian spirit” and that “this spirit gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 18). The *genius loci* of a place is mostly related to its “character” or “essence”. Bearing on Louis Kahn’s statement of “What does the building want to be?”, Norberg-Schulz states that “the *genius* (...) denotes what a thing *is*, or what it ‘wants to be’” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 6, 18). Within this frame, Norberg-Schulz regards *genius loci* in architecture’s task. As he puts, “architecture means to visualize the *genius loci*, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5).

The book “*Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*” offers an insight into Norberg-Schulz’s consideration of “place” within the discourse of architecture. In his book, Norberg-Schulz aims to open an understanding of architecture that entails the consideration of the “existential dimension” in regard to phenomenology, namely, “a phenomenology of architecture” – “a theory which understands architecture in concrete, existential terms” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5).

The necessity of phenomenological insight shows itself in Norberg-Schulz's considerations of "existential space". "Architecture represents a means to give man an 'existential foothold'" says Norberg-Schulz, where the concept of "existentiality"<sup>48</sup> attracts attention for the significance given by the author (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5). Being related within a phenomenological background, the participation of the word to his theories connotes a new direction in his methodological understanding of studying "place" in architecture.<sup>49</sup> As the author puts, "'existential space' is not a logico-mathematical term, but comprises the basic relationships between man and his environment" and architecture may be defined as the "concretization of existential space" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5). As Holloway & Hubbard state, "existentialism demands a locally specific view from 'below'; a grounded view exploring the concrete and particular perspectives of individual people in specific places" (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 69). Heidegger's notion of *dasein* (dwelling) as "being in the world" is referred to as a central way of thought in that respect; as suggested:

For existentialists, this [Heidegger's notion of "being in the world"] is the key to understanding the relationship between people and the world. 'Being' is characterized by existing physically in the world – taking up physical space and existing in relation to other physical objects (including other people). From this perspective, it is the **relational encounter with the world** that brings the world into existence for each person. People's physical relation to things, therefore, affects the way that they organize and make sense of their worlds. This means that our knowledge of the world can, firstly, be said to be created by us (rather than something we simply discover) and secondly, results from our encounters with things (which are, for example, in front or behind, above or below, our bodies).

Existential ideas propose that humans create their worlds by making meaningful the physical phenomena – other people, places and objects –

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<sup>48</sup> As is stated, "existentialism is one of the source of approaches that came out as a reaction to the "abstract" and "universal" naturalistic approaches" and is related with the work of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre as "a philosophy which stresses the specificity and uniqueness of each individual's experience of the world" (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 69).

<sup>49</sup> As he puts: "In *Intentions in Architecture*, art and architecture were analyzed "scientifically", that is by means of methods taken over from natural science. I do not think that this approach is wrong, but today I find other methods more illuminating. When we treat architecture analytically [in a scientific way] we miss the concrete environmental character, that is, the very quality which is the object of man's identification, and which may give him a sense of existential foothold (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5).

they encounter as they move through geographical space (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, 69).

The concept of “dwelling” (*dasein*) as coined by Heidegger is influential on Norberg-Schulz’s theorizations, as his adoption of the term builds a way to understand architecture in a concrete manner. “Dwelling” put as the “purpose of architecture” is a main guideline in Norberg-Schulz’s consideration of “existential space” where “place” becomes a medium to approach that existentiality. As he comments:

“Existential foothold” and “dwelling” are synonyms, and “dwelling”, in an existential sense, is the purpose of architecture. Man dwells when he can orientate himself within and identify himself with an environment, or, in short, when he experiences the environment as meaningful. Dwelling therefore implies something more than “shelter”. It implies that the spaces where life occurs are *places*, in the true sense of the word. A place is a space which has a distinct character (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5).

Within this context, the definition of “dwelling” as “man dwells when he can orientate himself within and identify himself with an environment” constitutes Norberg-Schulz’s structuration of the term “existential space”; he studies the issue in two “complementary” terms: “space” and “character” which, as Norberg-Schulz claims, corresponds respectively to “orientation” and “identification” that man needs to “dwell” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 22). On the whole, Norberg-Schulz’s theorization upon these terms is suggested as a synthesis of phenomenology and Kevin Lynch’s cognitive urban design theory.<sup>50</sup> As Norberg-Schulz states about his theorization:

Identification and orientation are primary aspects of man’s being-in-the-world. Whereas identification is the basis for man’s sense of *belonging*, orientation is the function which enables him to be that *homo viator*, which is part of his nature (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 22).

To summarize Norberg-Schulz’s conceptualization of the study of “place”, and hence “*genius loci*”,

1. The notion of totality is important in the author’s conceptualizations. While the author studies place in two ways, as natural environments and man-made

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<sup>50</sup> This issue was raised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. F. Cână Bilsel in the thesis jury session on 02.09.08.

environments, he evaluates “place” also as an indicator of “environmental totalities”:

The structure of place becomes manifest as environmental totalities which comprise the aspects of character and space. Such places are known as “countries, “regions”, “landscapes”, “settlements” and buildings. (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 15).

Within that respect, basically, Norberg-Schulz considers “place” as “a concrete term for environment” that remains as “an integral part of existence” in “reference to a locality” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 6). However, it is more than abstract location that the author means; as he puts:

We mean a totality made up of concrete things having material substance, shape, texture and colour. Together these things determine an “environmental character”, which is the essence of place. In general a place is given as such a character or “atmosphere”. A place is therefore a qualitative, “total” phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 6).

2. “The everyday lifeworld” constitutes an important verifier in the study of “place”. Within this respect, as the author claims, a “scientific” look in the study of “place” necessarily becomes hazardous for the nature of the study (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 6). Phenomenology is what Schulz marks as a method to capture “the everyday lifeworld”. As was mentioned before, Norberg-Schulz’s conception of “place” in architecture is referred to be based on phenomenological backgrounds; as he puts, “A phenomenology of architecture is therefore urgently needed”.
3. The understanding of “place” may be gathered via three steps. As he puts: “the structure of place ought to be described in terms of ‘landscape’ and ‘settlement’, and analyzed by means of categories of ‘space’ and ‘character’” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 12). According to the author, the first step is distinguishing natural and man-made environments namely, “landscape” and “settlements”, the second step is the study of “space” in reference to the Gestalt psychology (within the relationship

between inside and outside) (contributing to “orientation”), and the third step is the study of “character” (contributing to “identification”).

“**Space**”, studied by means of orientation, is explored mostly in relation to Kevin Lynch’s theory of mental mapping where the constitution of a good “environmental image” is due to concern. Norberg-Schulz highlights the notions of “centralization”, “direction”, “rhythm”, “proximity”, “geometry”, “figure ground relationship”, and “extention and enclosure” in relation to orientation. He aims to put up a universal understanding, as Lynch and others also attempted, in regard of the study of space in existential terms.

“**Character**”, contributing to “identification”, on the other hand, constitutes intangibilities in respect to “space”. For Norberg-Schulz, “character” applies to the “general comprehensive ‘atmosphere’” and “the concrete form and substance of the space-defining elements”, and hence is a “more general and a more concrete concept than ‘space’” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 13-4). While “character” seems to be a difficult term to define, in the general sense, it is “determined by the material and formal constitution of the place”; as he puts, (its understanding is based on):

We must therefore ask: *how* is the ground on which we walk, *how* is the sky above our heads, or in general; *how* are the boundaries which define the place. How a boundary is depends upon its formal articulation, which is again related to the way it is “built”. Looking at a building from this point of view, we have to consider how it rests on the ground and how it rises towards the sky. Particular attention has to be given to its lateral boundaries, or walls, which also contribute decisively to determine the character of the urban environment (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 14).

For Norberg-Schulz, “character” is a concrete part of the life-world and is not given due emphasis in architecture. It is the notion of character of a place that the author explores in relation to phenomenology. Norberg-Schulz points out the need to provide a phenomenology of architecture that “comprise(s) the basic modes of construction and their relationship to formal articulation” to get a “truely concrete basis”, based on the idea of “character” as being very much related with “*how things*



are made” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 14). The understanding of the character of a place seems to depict the essence of a place; remembering that phenomenological approach to place which asks “what makes a place a place?”.

<b>place</b>	designated by	nouns
<b>space</b>	denoted by	prepositions
<b>character</b>	denoted by	adjectives

**Figure 2:** Illustration showing Norberg-Schulz’s determinations over some nuances between “place”, “space” and character”.<sup>51</sup>

In relation to the understanding of that character of a place, Norberg-Schulz examines the basic relations between man and earth. As the author puts, “man-made places are related to nature in three basic ways”:

Firstly, man wants to make the natural structure more precise. That is, he wants to *visualize* his “understanding” of nature, “expressing” the existential foothold he has gained. To achieve this, he *builds* what he has seen. Where nature suggests a delimited space he builds an enclosure; where nature appears “centralised”, he erects a *Mal*; where nature indicates a direction, he makes a path. Secondly, man has to *complement* the given situation, by adding what is “lacking”. Finally, he has to symbolize his understanding of nature (including himself).

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<sup>51</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 15. As the author suggests further: “Here we return to the concrete “things” of our everyday lifeworld (...) When places are classified we should therefore use terms such as “island”, “promontory”, “bay”, “forest”, “grove,” or “square”, “street”, courtyard”, and “floor”, “wall”, “roof”, “ceiling”, “window” and “door”. Places are hence designated by nouns. This implies that they are considered real “things that exist”, which is the original meaning of the word “substantive”. Space, instead, as a system of relations, is denoted by prepositions. (In our daily life we hardly talk about “space”, but about things that are “over” or “under”, “before” or “behind” each other...) Character, finally, is denoted by adjectives ... A character is a complex totality, and a single adjective evidently cannot cover more than one aspect of this totality. Often, however, a character is so distinct that one word seems sufficient one word seems sufficient to grasp its essence. We see, thus, that the very structure of everyday language confirms our analysis of place”.

All the three relationships imply that man *gather* the experienced meanings to create for himself an *imago mundi* or *microcosmos* which concretizes his world. Gathering evidently depends on symbolization, and implies a transposition of meanings to another place, which thereby becomes an existential “centre” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 17).

The three steps correspond to “visualization”, “complementation” and “symbolization” respectively. In Norberg-Schulz’s terms, these are “aspects of the general processes of settling” and “dwelling, in the existential sense of the word, depends on these functions” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 17-8). Within this consideration, Norberg-Schulz cites Heidegger for his illustration of these general processes. As Heidegger mentions about a “bridge”:

The bridge swings over the stream with ease and power. It does not just connect banks that are already there, the banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream and bank and land into each other’s neighborhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream (Heidegger in Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 34).

Upon this quotation, Norberg-Schulz considers “the building of the bridge” as a movement to disclose the “hidden” meanings inherent in the landscape; this evaluation further becomes his working definition of architecture: “The existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 18).

As Heidegger’s illustration of the bridge depicts (together with the comments of Norberg-Schulz), the very nature of the relations between man and the environment constitutes importance for the understanding of “place”. The intention of the designer towards the environment is noteworthy within this respect; to remember, the understanding of *genius loci* is very much related with the corporation of human awareness and responsiveness. As mentioned before, the consideration of *genius loci* conveys “human awareness and responsive place-making” (Howett, 1993, 69).

As can be thought, being parts of the building activity and place making, Norberg-Schulz's three steps of visualization, complementation and symbolization illustrate the existence of both the designer-creator-builder-dweller, etc. – the person – and the physical environment. Remembering again the phenomenologically driven ideas mentioned in the preceding chapter, existentiality and the idea of *being-in-the-world* composes such a pattern in relations between man-made environments and natural environments; thus, between man and the world.

The above mentioned considerations of Norberg-Schulz called into being several contributions. He inspired most of the place-based approaches. His emphasis on the man-environment relations in the form of visualization, complementation symbolization may serve as an important denominator of or relations with the world.

Within these frames of thought, works that evaluate the kinds of relations between man and environment as important in the creation of “place” sticks out to be given due consideration. As landscape architect Catherine Howett states, to ask the type of our engagement with the world is vital; quoting from William Blake's poem of “A Memorable Fancy” - “*If the doors of perception were cleansed, Everything would appear as it is...*” - the author aims to build up an understanding of “seeing truly” by putting that “our customary ways of looking at the world actually blind us to the reality of what is there, waiting to be known intimately and rapturously”, as Howett notes:

But what is meant by “the doors of perception” that must be “cleansed” if we are to see truly? Is it our eyes only? Do we perceive the world by *seeing* it, or is our vision just one among many “doors of perception” that can be awakened to a new and more vivid experience of the world? (Howett, 1993, 61)

In reference to the quotation above, it may be considered that the author structures her ideas upon the differentiation between “looking to” and “seeing” the world, and states that “seeing” implies more. “Seeing” becomes synonymous with “understanding”, as she puts:

The act of seeing is so central to our conception of human nature that language identifies seeing with understanding – we say “Now I see, I see what you mean (Howett, 1993, 61).

Yi Fu Tuan is cited by Howett to illustrate that “seeing” and “understanding” – a notion which may also be correlated to a “vivid experience of the world”:

To the Eskimo, space is not pictorial or boxed in, but something always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment. **He learns to orient himself with all senses alert.** He has to during certain times of winter when sky and earth merge and appear to be made of the same substance.... Under such conditions the Eskimo cannot rely on points of reference given by permanent landmarks: he must depend on the shifting relationships of snow contours, on the types of snow, wind, salt air and ice crack. The direction and smell of the wind is a guide, together with the feel of ice and snow under his feet.... On horizonless days he lives in an acoustic-olfactory space (Tuan, 1974, 11 in Howett, 1993, 61).

Tuan’s explorations of the life of the Eskimo also shares with the idea of Norberg-Schulz, “to become ‘friends’ with a particular environment” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 21). The importance of interrogating the “character” of a “place” constitutes importance in “seeing” or “understanding” the man-environment relationships. What the two authors highlight is to propose direct relationships with the world. Having *indirect* relationships with the world / environment creates problems in ways of “perception”:

How can we, accustomed to seeing things as we do, imagine a work of landscape architecture that does not give priority to how a place looks, that does not expect the designer to impose conventional forms upon the chaos “out there” in which the act of design originates, transforming it into a pleasing object of contemplation? (Howett, 1993, 66)

In reference to the indirect relationships with the world, Howett criticizes the so called canonical design attitudes published through “acceptable styles” that would isolate any kind of anomalies and calls for the “necessity of “an experiential aesthetics”. As Howett states about the reverberances of the criticism of having indirect relations with the environment, the reactional movement took place in the light of phenomenologically conceived human experience:

A body of scholarly work and criticism has emerged in recent years that seeks to explore the possibilities for radical revision or supplanting of this dominant aesthetic model (...) Philosophers, geographers, environmental psychologists, design professionals, historians and critics, and other contributors to this dialogue share a common purpose in wishing to expose the limitations of the aesthetic in which a wide range of sensory, emotional and symbolic values are sacrificed to the primacy of compositional criteria determined by the act of seeing. Taking as their starting place the fundamental human experience of *being-in-the-world* described by philosopher Martin Heidegger (1962), they argue for the necessity of an experiential aesthetics to replace the operative one derived from Cartesian subject-object dualism, distancing us physically and spiritually from a world in which we are actually immersed (Howett, 1993, 68).

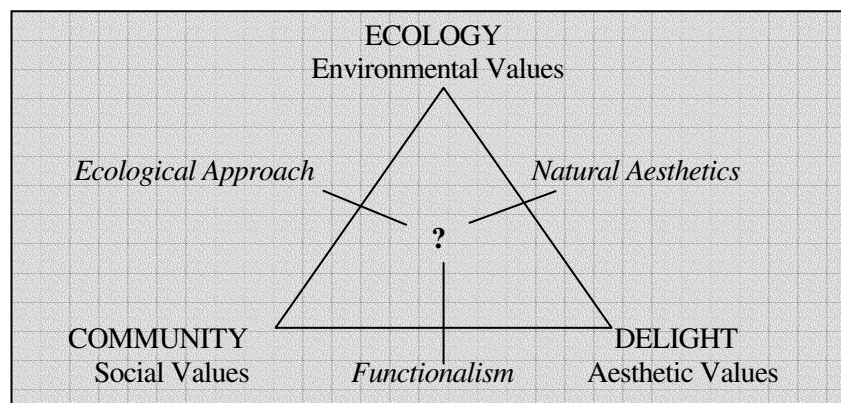
Howett coins that concept of “aesthetic experience” in reference to Neil Evernden who defines aesthetics as “a way of being, a stance toward the world”, and as he puts “...an aesthetic experience requires a relationship **between a seeking subject and a responsive world**” (Evernden in Howett, 1993, 68). That “seeking subject” and “responsive world” is very much phenomenological. Here, the writer emphasizes the importance of the kind of man-environment relationships, which shall be very much due to consideration in any study of “place”. Moreover, mainly based on “experience”, the idea of “nature” as being more than “scenery” and “ourselves” more than spectators also poses a phenomenological background.

*Genius loci* is on the whole, frequently utilized by many authors – mostly from landscape architecture – who raised its significance for creating “meaningful” environments. Howett emphasizes the importance of being able to arrive at “opportunities for intensely vivid and immediate encounters with the natural world” “to introduce a more holistic experiential aesthetics in the design of outdoor environments” (Howett, 1993, 68). In that respect, she draws on the significance of “restoring the concept of “spirit of place” – *genius loci* – to nature” (Howett, 1993, 69). As she comments:

Contemporary design needs to invent forms that restore equity to the nature-culture equation. In this way, the unique character of each specific site might be made manifest instead of being suppressed. We have amply demonstrated our capacity to overcome whatever features of a particular

site challenge our intention to impose a kind of landscape, filling the world with “generic” shopping centers, subdivisions, office parks, and downtowns. Now we must find a way to listen, to yield, to discover the natural, not just the existing or potential cultural meanings of a place, exactly in the way that we come to know other human beings as individuals having unique characters and personalities (Howett, 1993, 69).

Writing on landscape architecture, Thompson evaluates *genius loci* as a “solutionary” concept in design process. In his “*Ecology, Community and Design*”, Thompson argues that “contemporary landscape architecture is concerned with three overlapping fields of value – the aesthetic, the social and the environmental”, where the centre overlapping area would mark a “possibility of an approach to design which could create all sorts of value”. “Trivalent design” is what Thompson incorporates within this context that can wholly apply to the fields of value that he mentions and within this understanding, *genius loci* comes out to be “the keystone that can lock trivalent design together” (Thompson, 2003, 66).



**Figure 3:** Illustration showing “aesthetic, social and environmental fields of value in landscape architecture”, based on Thompson’s work.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Figure gathered from Thompson’s work (Thompson, 2003, 67) (Figure 3.1).

### Other Searches for Frameworks of Creating Places

David Seamon is one of the pioneer researchers studying “place” within architecture in the light of phenomenological methods. He is concerned in “why places are important for people and how architecture and environmental design can be a vehicle for place making” (Seamon, 2000, 157). His aim seems to oscillate between conceptualizing “place” both as an object to understand and as a way of thinking to “design” namely “place-making”.

Having used phenomenological enquiry over a wide scale, from the use of “personal experience to understand the nature of a particular place” to the “interpretation of photography and imaginative literature as a way to understand essential experiential qualities of the person-environment relationship”, Seamon also draws on the possible use of phenomenological approach “to interpret architecture and to contribute to better environmental design”. Seamon, on the whole, credits the importance of place for people in the name of the establishment of the built environment. His point of departure, that “place” is very much related to phenomenology, as was mentioned above, makes him consider possible uses of phenomenology in architecture and environmental design.

Attempting to propose a certain phenomenological method, Seamon questions the way that the “intimate connectedness between person and world” which is, as was stated before, a core assumption of a phenomenological approach in understanding place, is studied. Seamon points out two main assumptions in the possible utilization of phenomenological method in environmental and architectural studies: that the relation of people and environment is an insoluble totality and that the method can be evaluated as one of “radical empiricism”. In that respect, in the light of these two assumptions, his contribution offers “a way of study whereby the researcher seeks to be open to the phenomenon and to allow it to show itself in its fullness and complexity *through her own direct involvement and understanding*” (Seamon, 2000, 163). As Seamon states about a phenomenological study of the built environment:

In that this style of study arises through firsthand, grounded contact with the phenomenon as it is experienced by the researcher, the approach can be called *empirical*, though the term is used much differently than by positivist scientists who refer to data that are materially identifiable and mathematically recordable (Seamon, 2000, 163).

If, in other words, phenomenological method can be called empirical, it must be identified as *radically* so, since understanding arises directly from the researcher's personal sensibility and awareness rather than from the usual secondhand constructions of positivist science – e.g. *a priori* theory and concepts, hypotheses, predetermined methodological procedures, statistical measures of correlation, and the like (Seamon, 2000, 163).

Seamon's approach over how a phenomenological approach should base itself is interesting in the way that he puts forward the researcher. As Seamon puts further, "the researcher must find ways to immerse herself in the text..." and "The phenomenologist must assume that she does not know the phenomenon but wishes to" (Seamon, 2000, 164).<sup>53</sup> His attitude may also be considered with a key term in phenomenological understanding that is intentionality.

We can also mention about the possible uses of phenomenology and environmental design studied within the limits of architectural design. Norwegian architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen's book "Archetypes in Architecture" of 1987 addresses the issue of typology and form in relation to phenomenology.<sup>54</sup> Seamon names the book as "a phenomenology of architectural form" and states that Thiis-Evensen puts his theory in relation to "floor", "roof" and "wall", as "the most basic elements of architecture":

Thiis-Evensen argues that these three architectural elements are not arbitrary but, rather, are common to all historical and cultural traditions. The essential existential ground of floor, wall, and roof, he argues, is the relationship between *inside and outside*. Just by being what they are, the floor, wall, and roof automatically create an inside in the midst of an outside, though in different ways: the floor, through *above* and *beneath*;

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<sup>53</sup> The author emphasizes that the illustration of the human experience in "experiential terms" is also important.

<sup>54</sup> To note, Thiis-Evensen was one of the doctorate students of Christian Norberg-Schulz.



the wall, through *within* and *around*; and the roof, through *over* and *below* (Seamon, 1998).<sup>55</sup>

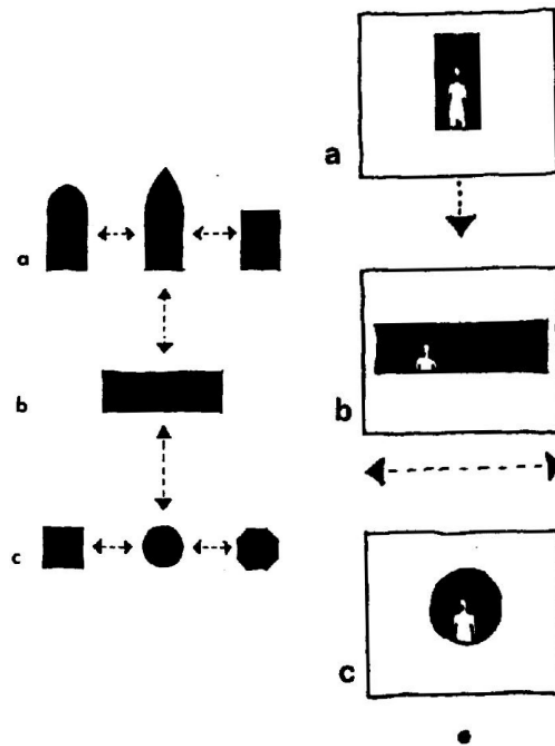
These elements become a medium to construct a universal understanding / framework, or “a common language of form” – to interpret human experience in terms of inside-outside dialectics. As Seamon reviews the work of the architect:

Thiis-Evensen demonstrates that a building’s relative degree of insideness or outsideness in regard to floor, wall, and roof can be clarified through *motion*, *weight*, and *substance*—the three “existential expressions of architecture”. By *motion*, he means the architectural element’s sense of dynamism or inertia—that is, whether the element seems to expand, to contract, or to rest in balance. *Weight* involves the sense of heaviness or lightness of the element and how it relates to gravity. Last, *substance* relates to the material sense of the element—whether it is soft or hard, coarse or fine, warm or cold, and so forth (Seamon, 1998).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> There are also some other works which similarly convey phenomenological understandings and frameworks in relation to individual buildings: R. Mugerauer, “Toward an Architectural Vocabulary: The Porch as a Between,” in D. Seamon (ed.), *Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology* (pp. 103-128) (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1993)

<sup>56</sup> For inner quotations, see: T. Thiis-Evensen, 1987, *Archetypes in Architecture* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press).



**Figure 4:** Thiis-Evensen's sketches showing variations of windows creating varying inside – outside relationships.

Source:

[http://www.tucottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/Wolke/eng/Subjects/982/Seamon/seamon\\_t.html](http://www.tucottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/Wolke/eng/Subjects/982/Seamon/seamon_t.html) (accessed on 18.07.2008).

### 3.1.2.3 From “Place” to “Non-place”

As was mentioned before, “the debate over the credibility and importance of place” is associated with two groups of scholars, differing in their attitude towards the conception of “place” in terms of their belief in either its demise or its necessity. (Arefi, 1999, 179). Besides the plurality over discussions of “place” together with the common reactionary ground driven by humanistic attitudes, there are also “on the edge” opposing views over its conceptions, which are mainly based on its credibility. For some, “place” means a lot, while for some others, it pulls certain problems. As Ulusu Uraz & Aydan Balamir acknowledge about that so called “polarization”:

The idea of place in architecture, having established its corpus of interdisciplinary knowledge and debate, has incited the growth of opposing views that are critical to the faith in an essentially place-bound vision of design.

Deriving from Derrida's view that meaning tends to be unstable in our society, the search for place is rendered as being nostalgic and conservative, while the idea of space is regarded less loaded and hence radical. Perhaps as a reaction to this nostalgic aping of the past, today's avant-garde argues that there is something positive about 'non-place' with its attendant themes of rupture and disjunction. In extreme situations, the advocates of the conception of non-place would dismiss the followers of place making as being conservative and incapable of understanding the contemporary view. Those who believe that the idea of place still has currency would feel that their opponents are simply detracting from the fundamental purpose of architecture and urbanism. (Uluş Uraz and Balamir, 2006, 2).

Isenstadt refers to 1980s as years when "context" became an issue of debate over its credibility, as it was depicted as a "commitment to rationalized technique". As the author notes:

With the issue of physical context so conspicuously promiscuous and, of course, ultimately ineffectual in generating new form when isolated from other factors of design, confidence in existing context as a touchstone for design began to erode (Isenstadt, 2005, 170)

Within this frame, Isenstadt refers to Alan Colquhoun's critic of postmodernist attitudes, in which "without growing from structure, or function, classical motifs referred to a generalized classicism, an architecture that represented Architecture rather than related to the specifics of a particular place" (Isenstadt, 2005, 171).<sup>57</sup>

At one extension, the necessity of "place" is questioned in relation to the place-based approaches rooted in phenomenology and it is in the form of a discrediting of the assumptions of place-based approaches. As Aravot mentions:

The practice of placemaking as such was never explicitly renounced or denigrated, but specific realizations were condemned for failing to provide the manifold sense of place, due to over-emphasis of

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<sup>57</sup> Isenstadt is referring to Alan Colquhoun's argument in his "From Bricolage to Myth, or How to Put Humpty-Dumpty Together Again", *Oppositions 12* (Spring 1978).

morphological and symbolic components, and too little attention to non-physical aspects.

Moreover, authenticity and identity of place, the axes of 'naïve' place making, were gradually criticized as empty phrases, ridiculed by 'glocalization' in shopping malls, theme parks and projects such as the Universal City Walk (Aravot, 2002, 2006).



**Figure 5:** *Piazza d'Italia*, Charles W. Moore, New Orleans, 1976-79.  
Source: <http://www.pitt.edu/~tokerism/0040/images3/316.jpg> (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 6:** *Piazza d'Italia*, Charles W. Moore, New Orleans, 1976-79  
Source: [http://drowninginculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/no\\_cmoore\\_pomopkinglot.jpg](http://drowninginculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/no_cmoore_pomopkinglot.jpg) (accessed on 18.08.2008)

Other than issues of representation, the discrediting is claimed to gain sense also in relation to issues of power; as Aravot states, place-based interpretations were accused of being exclusionary by poststructural interpretations (Aravot, 2002, 206).

At another sphere, the ones believing in the demise of “place” consider it as a futile aspect; loss of place is not a problem, rather it is systematically planned. In that respect, due consideration shall be given to sociologist Melvin Webber for his essay “The Urban Place and the Nonplace Urban Realm” of 1964. As Arefi informs, the term of “nonplace” was firstly used in that essay (Arefi, 1999, 180). About the radical slogan of Webber, Mallgrave comments the following:

Against the model of the city as a central active hub from which all commercial and cultural activities dissipate outward, Webber offered a futuristic “communications system” model in which electronic and other media access to information increasingly diminishes the importance of “place” and the need for human contact (Mallgrave, 2005, 409).

Besides the audacity in terms of the usage of the term “non-place”, being opposed to place-based approaches of the period, the above mentioned model of city planning emerged as a highly revolutionary proposal in architecture.

Webber’s theory of “community without propinquity” is also cited by critical regionalist Kenneth Frampton in his essay “Technology and the Crisis of Place”, where Frampton refers to the theory for its relevance with the concrete example of the urban settlement of Milton Keynes (Frampton, 1979, 317). As Frampton comments:

The model of the ‘non-place urban realm’, to coin Melvyn Webber’s brilliant ideological slogan of the 1960s with its absolute rejection of place, brings the whole argument a little closer to home, not only for England, but also for the profession. For if we accept that that, which first masquerades as pure rationality and function also embodies value, that is, that it facilitates the optimization of certain idea at the expense of others, then we may surely begin to question those ideologies such as Webber’s, that have led us of late to the wholesale adoption of the ‘open city’ as a normative model; not the rapacious and almost spontaneous colonization which Los Angeles represents, but the welfare state city of consumerism, namely Milton Keynes (Frampton, 1979, 317).

The issue of ideology is emphasized by Frampton as being a crucial part of urban planning in “a landscape or regional plan” (Frampton, 1979, 314). In that manner, Webber’s slogan of the 1960s is considered as being highly ideological. Frampton exemplifies this aspect upon the example of the urban settlement Milton Keynes:

A landscape or a regional plan is as capable of imposing certain ‘ideological’ restrictions as much as any building, and what often masquerades as unmediated function or reason is often the embodiment of conscious values. It would be difficult, for example, to imagine anything more ‘ideological’, than the present master plan for Milton Keynes, and certainly one is aware of the ideology that attended its birth. This discourse confronts the issue of the status of objects and their capacity to mediate between men and between men and nature (Frampton, 1979, 314).

In another article, Frampton writes further about the New English Town Milton Keynes, which was designed by official architects:

This city, based on a somewhat irregular street grid, was apparently conceived as an instant Los Angeles to be laid over the agrarian landscape of Buckinghamshire. Its empty irregular network, configured after the topography, was yet another exercise in indeterminacy pushed to absurdity. Despite the Neoclassicism of its Miesian shopping centre, its capacity to represent its municipal identity is still virtually non-existent. One has no notion of arrival here save for the graphic indication of the legal boundary, and for the casual visitor Milton Keynes seems nothing more than a rather random collection of more or less well-designed housing estates (Frampton, 1982, 26).

Frampton further mentions that the settlement does not convey any sense of boundary, and it has no clearly perceivable order within the physical environment (Frampton, 1982, 26). Webber’s program is stated to be related with “the creation of optimum marketing conditions” and as Frampton further acknowledges, “the selection of an open-ended planning model in accordance with the hypothetical interests of a consumer society was surely a conscious one” (Frampton, 1982, 27).

Webber’s theory of “urban nonplaces” can be thought to be the starting point of a paradigm. This paradigm includes a new era accentuated with “freedom from the constraints of proximity” (Arefi, 1999, 180). The advance of a “communication

model” which would cut off human contact constitutes one aspect of the theory. On the other hand, the idea of ideology showing itself in the creation of spaces that would accommodate the survival of capitalism would be another concern related with the production of these certain spaces.

In another respect, the above mentioned realm of “urban nonplace” phenomenon is stated to have triggered French anthropologist Marc Augé for his book “Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity” (Arefi, 1999, 182). In his book, Augé examines “non-places” as the new subject of anthropology and associates the changes in the conception of “place” and “space” within the new phenomena.

As anthropologist Samuel Collins states, Augé’s book “elevates the ATM machine, the airport lounge and the superhighway to the status of high theory through a discussion of the interrelationship (and dissociation) of space, culture, and identity” (Collins). In his book, Augé evaluates the atypical typologies of “non-places”. As Augé states:

Non-places are the real measure of our time; one that could be quantified by totaling all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called “means of transport” (aircraft, trains and road vehicles), the airports and railway stations, hotel chains leisure parks, large retail outlets, and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purpose of communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself (Augé, 1995, 79).

Augé defines the phenomena of “non-place” through the connotations of “anthropological place”. In that manner, what he means by “anthropological place” gains importance. It is, as defined by Augé, “the one occupied by the indigenous inhabitants who live in it, cultivate it, defend it, mark its strong points and keep its frontiers under surveillance” (Augé, 1995, 42). “Anthropological place” is further defined as being “relational”, being “historical” and being “concerned with identity”, as Augé comments:

These places have at least three characteristics in common. They want to be – people want them to be – places of identity, of relations and of

history. The layout of the house, the rules of residence, the zoning of the village, placement of altars, configuration of public open spaces, land distribution correspond for every individual to a system of possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts whose content is both spatial and social (Augé, 1995, 52-53).

The notions of “relations”, “identity” and “history” as stated to be components of anthropological places also coincide with the notions of “nature”, “city” and “culture” in some aspects. The term “non-place” is defined by the author in accordance with the definition of its counter term, “anthropological place”:

If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which can not be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place (Augé, 1995, 77-8).

While the definition calls for a direct proposition in which “non-place” seems to be the negative of “place”, the difference between “place” and “non-place” does not depend exactly on the linguistic oppositeness. Augé notes that “place” and “non-place” should be considered as “opposed polarities” in such a way that “the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed”, and he further comments that “they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten” (Augé, 1995, 79).

Such relationship between “place” and “non-place” is due to consideration, as the word “non-place” comes to be more than an indication of “placelessness”. Augé further states that “in the concrete reality of today’s world, places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together”, thus he implies the existence of the possibility of “non-place” in any place (Augé, 1995, 107). About the relationship between “place” and “non-place”, Collins states that “non-place continues the relations and identities of anthropological place in highly commodified forms”. These thoughts are much more related with interpretation of contemporary world within the phenomenon of capitalism and globalization as determining agents of the production of space.



The changes in the meanings of “space” and “place” are denoted to be important in identifying the major periodic discussions of the time as given examples of “the arguments about modernity, postmodernity, globalization and the information society” (Gustafson, 2003, 5). In that respect, Augé studies and correlates the phenomena of “non-places” upon the condition of current time being, that is what he calls “supermodernity”. In this respect, the concept of “supermodernity” as advanced by Augé to define the late capitalist phenomena and to map the distinctions between “anthropological places” and “non-places” will be given due consideration.

### **3.1.2.3.1 “Supermodernity”**

Within an adumbration of the condition of “supermodernity”, Marc Augé defines the contemporary world by means of its “accelerated transformations”. Mainly, the issue is characterized by general “excess” in three main categories; which appeal to the “excess of space” in the form of “spatial overabundance”, the “excess of the individual” in the form of “individualization of references” and the “excess of time” in the form of “overabundance of events” (Augé, 1995, 24-41).

“Excess of space” is at the very outset related with both “the shrinking of the planet” and its “becoming open to us”. Augé comments about the current situation as an era “characterized by changes of scale” in the means of the “rapid means of transport” (Augé, 1995, 31). Within the spatial overabundance, one can experience various places at the same time. Indeed, according to Augé, this experience which is mainly related with the “proliferation of imaged or imaginary references” in the form a “homogeneous” mixture of images and words is related with a false “familiarity”, that would be a result of recognition not one of knowledge (Augé, 1995, 31-34).

“Excess of the individual” is related with “the figure of the ego”, as Augé comments:

...never before have individual histories been so explicitly affected by collective history, but never before, either, have the reference points for collective identification been so unstable (Augé, 1995, 37).

In this situation, the position of the individuals within the overabundance of events and spaces, as stated by Augé, corresponds to a “way of being” through a selection and interpretation of the diverse elements presented to her/him (Augé, 1995, 37).

“Excess of time” is related with the term “acceleration of history” which contributes to an overabundance in the density of events and thus a difficulty about thinking about time. Sözer states that this difficulty is not seen to be stemming from the “collapse of an idea of progress”, referring to “postmodern” theory, but as a consequence of the ever-increasing “information transfer network” (Sözer, 2002, 13-4).

With its overabundant structure, supermodernity does not necessarily convey a crisis in meaning. Nevertheless, it is considered as an important identifier of the contemporary world by Augé, as he comments:

what is new is not the world lacks meaning, or has little meaning, or less than it used to have; it is that we seem to feel an explicit and intense daily need to give it meaning: to give meaning to the world, not just some village or lineage (Augé, 1995, 29).

Within the overabundance of aspects, inhibiting our interpretation of the recent past, “it is our need to understand the whole of the present” says Augé (Augé, 1995, 30). In that respect, Augé believes in looking to the present which is, according to him, the only primary medium to understand supermodernity. “The past and future seem as disappearing from the sight” in regard of the overabundant structure of supermodernity, in “excess of time”, “excess of events” and “excess of the individual” (Sözer, 2002, 14). As Augé mentions:

The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelarian modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of ‘places of memory’, and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position (Augé, 1995, 77-8).

On the whole, in this part of the study, the transformations on the notion of “place” (towards “non-place”) have been given consideration regarding the debate over the relevance of “place” in relation to “non-place”. In fact, from one point of view, namely in capitalism’s frontage, place is not useless; it enhances maximization of profit. While the concepts “the loss of place”, “placelessness” or the phenomenon of “non-place” are related with a decrease in the importance of “place” under “supermodernity” or some other conditions; Harvey considers “place” as an important aim of capitalist mode of production and in that respect, he studies the construction of “place” through the political economy of capitalism. The construction of places, as Harvey states, is highly dependent on the trajectory of capitalism which is “necessarily growth oriented, technologically dynamic, and crisis prone” and this process relies on exclusively “geographical expansion” (Harvey, 1996, 295). Harvey defines a “generalized crisis” in the “tension between place-bound-bound fixity and spatial mobility of capital” and in that occasion, “the history of capitalism is, then, punctuated by intense phases of spatial reorganization” (Harvey, 1996, 296).

Under capitalism, on the one hand, it seems obvious that there is the total homogenization of space bringing about a sense of placelessness. On the other hand, there exists the concept of **selling places** hand in hand as “place” is one of the aims of capitalist mode of production as mentioned above in reference to Harvey. In our contemporary cities, other than homogenized environments, there is also the creation of “**niches**”; boutique hotels, representing of the unique villas, outstanding buildings, designs by star architects, etc.

## CHAPTER 4

### A SEARCH FOR A CURRENT CONCEPTUALIZATION OF “PLACE” IN ARCHITECTURE

So far, the genealogy of “place” and some of its related terms have been depicted within its itinerary in two main disciplines affected by humanistic attitudes. While there exists a plurality upon the various discussions that took “place” as subject matter, it has been suggested that the notion of “place” survived to be a common critical term with certain values and meanings attached to the word itself.

To reconsider in mind, the genealogy of the term throughout history have gathered together various positions and spheres. Namely the sense of “place” inaugurated various pluralist approaches. Relph, as the father of the term “placelessness”, on the whole, played his critical role consistently through his writings and strived for a critical understanding of “place” that can be announced only and truly upon “the static *physical setting, the activities and the meanings*” (Relph, 1976, 47). Urban researcher and activist Jane Jacobs’ “The Death and Life of Great American Cities”, where she mentioned about the everyday life in her own living place, activated notions of neighbourhood, everyday life and “place” by constructing “sensitivity” in both academy and community. Though not given full reference in this study, Alexander’s “pattern language” together with the conception of “the timeless way of building”, proposed a new group of practitioners / thinkers in architectural and urban design. His approach was an attempt to propose an objective and “scientific” attitude on its own. Considered under the heading of contextualism, Rowe’s “Collage City” and the studies of Rossi and Gregotti in relation to the “existing urban form” were also related to the responsive attitudes towards modernism, together with the formation of urban design programs in universities (Isenstadt, 2005, 161-163). Seamon, on the other hand, strived to put up a phenomenologically fed architectural

attitude (acknowledged by mainly environmental design research) and he aimed to understand “why places are important for people”, and with the answer of this question, “how architecture and environmental design can be a vehicle for place making” (Seamon, 2000, 157). In that respect, his main point of departure was to understand people’s (including the architect’s and/or researcher’s) understandings and intentionalities towards “place”. Norberg-Schulz, though being accused of his approach by mainly poststructuralists, drew himself an itinerary that began with a scientific attitude in his *Space, Existence and Architecture*, and later inclined towards “a phenomenology of architecture”. Coining the term “*genius loci*”, his definition of the “existential purpose of building” as “to make a site become a place” constitutes importance in relation to the steps of visualization, complementation and symbolization.

“Green architecture”, as named by many, constitutes a more current discourse which offers immense area for discussion of “place” in the name of “sustainability”. Within this context, due respect may be given to a recent exhibition held in New York in 2000. As Peter Buchanan, the curator of the “Ten Shades of Green” exhibition governed by “The Architectural League of New York” states:

...green design is not only about energy efficiency, and it is not purely a technical matter. Instead it involves a whole nexus of interrelated issues, the social, cultural, psychological and economic dimensions of which are as important as the technical and ecological... (Buchanan)<sup>58</sup>

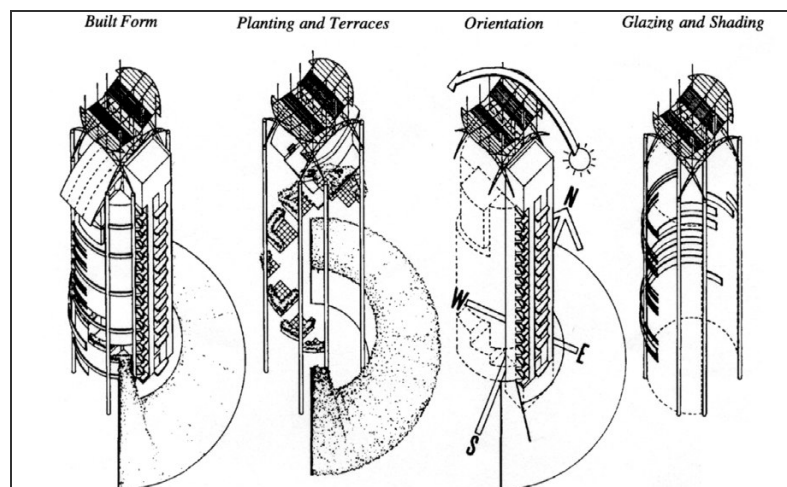
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<sup>58</sup> Peter Buchanan, “Introduction” to the website of the exhibition “Ten Shades of Green” governed by The Architectural League of New York. Within this exhibition, ten buildings are chosen to depict ten key issues in respect to green architecture which are named as: “low energy/high performance, replenishable sources; recycling; embodied energy; long life, loose fit; total life cycle costing; embedded in place; access and urban context; health and happiness; and community and connection”. Within these key issues addressed in the exhibition, the conception of “place” plays broad roles; being “embedded in place” is considered as a key issue together with the issues of “access and urban context” and “community and connection”. As the curator mentions, the chosen buildings illustrate “an architecture consonant with, rather than destructive of, the natural world; an architecture that supports community; an architecture that offers much richer sensual experience of the environment and an intensified sense of place; an architecture, in short, that increases the quality of life” (Buchanan). Being “embedded in place” as a process in which the design process is proposed over the elaboration of a “dense web of complex symbiotic relationships with all aspects of the building’s setting” is depicted as to occur in two ways; one



**Figure 7:** North-West view of Kenneth Yang’s Menara Mesiniaga, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.<sup>59</sup>

Source: <http://www.yangsquare.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/mesiniagaa4.pdf> (accessed on 04.08.2008)



**Figure 8:** Drawings of Kenneth Yang’s Menara Mesiniaga, Selangor Darul Ehsan, showing aspects of “built form”, “planting and terraces”, “orientation” and “glazing and shading”.

Source: <http://www.yangsquare.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/mesiniagaa2.pdf> (accessed on 04.08.2008)

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“informed by” local knowledge, materials, traditions, etc., and the other, “based on rigorous surveys of all aspects of the site and then predictive analysis that draws on state of the art computer modelling” (Buchanan).

<sup>59</sup> The building is given credit for its being “ecologically responsive” and “operating climatically in a hybrid fashion” (Frampton, 2000, 28).

Other than the plurality over discussions of “place” together with the common reactional ground, it has also been mentioned that there are “on the edge” opposing views over its conceptions, which are mainly based on its credibility.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, besides discussions of “place” taking up various positions, “accelerated transformations”, says French anthropologist Marc Augé, define contemporary world of late capitalist era (Augé, 1995). Certainly, and specifically, there is also a transformation in the conception of “place” towards “non-place”, which is generally accentuated with statements like “loss of place” and “placelessness”, and which constitutes the problem of this thesis together with the transformations within the discipline of architecture and the actual/everyday life of city and citizens. “Supermodernity”, as was mentioned in relation to Augé’s “non-place” theory is referred to by others as a dynamo for the placeless geography of the late-capitalist era (Yırtıcı, 2003). “Overabundance” of space, time and individualization characterizes our world, as Augé mentions (Augé, 1995). In relation to these excessive situations of our time, architect Rafael Moneo claims that “place” is inserted in a process of devaluation in the current era. As he puts,

Everything seems to be against the idea of “place”. Everything seems to yearn for a homogeneous world covered with same images and teeming with the same products. As if there was only “anywhere”. As if the idea of place does not convey value anymore. As if we would not ever care where we are. (Moneo, 1992, 5).<sup>61</sup>

But still,

... architecture demands place from “anywhere”. Architecture provides the aboveground building’s real presence. And it is at the place where the building gains its inevitable uniqueness, where the specificity of architecture comes into view and can be understood that the building’s specific goal arrives at its unique form of being. Place, at the same time, enables the establishment of the proper distance between us and what we

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<sup>60</sup> As mentioned before, the criticisms were mostly constructed on some of the assumptions of phenomenological theory.

<sup>61</sup> Translated into English by the author of the thesis: “Her şey yer fikrine karşı duruyormuş gibi gözüküyor. Her şey aynı ürünlerle dolup taşan, aynı görüntülerin kapladığı homojen bir dünyayı arzuluyormuş gibi görünüyor. Sanki yalnızca ‘herhangi bir yer’ varmış gibi. Sanki yer düşüncesi artık değer taşıyor. Sanki nerede bulunduğumuzu hiç önemsemeyebilirmişiz”.

produce. Place is ever so much fully inevitable that the architects who deny the idea of place and who does not care about context are even urged to incorporate it to their works, and consequently, are obliged to invent a place. The recent attempts of creating a fake history or ground, or unearthing an archeological area to locate a preset architecture upon are due to this issue. Because in the root of all sorts of arhitecture stands place. Architecture is created upon it and consequently its essence and its presence becomes to be in close relation to it. Place is where architecture stands. Architecture can not be at “anywhere” (Moneo, 1992, 5).<sup>62</sup>

Can we talk about a sense of place, still?

#### 4.1 “Place” Bound Design over Geography of Placelessness

Continuing to be an issue of debate in relation to the supermodernist discussions of globalization and industrialization for the last 50 years, for many recent writings in architecture “place” is still a vital term to dwell on for the poetics of life and architecture. On the whole, besides attaching notions of humanity, “place” is attempted to be conceptualized for the very basic characterization of architecture. The discourse on “place” concerns its reactional utilization within the very task of architecture as a way of mediation with the earth. Writings of Pallasmaa, Perez-Gomez, Mugerauer, Frampton, and some others establish a literature conveying issues of architectural design and its education which are bound up in “place”. Besides their writings, the practice of some architects also depicts a current search for “place”. In these respects, the thesis will deal with some of the current literature on “place” upon writings and practices.

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<sup>62</sup> Translated into English by the author of the thesis: “... mimarlık yeri ‘herhangi bir yer’den talep etmektedir. Mimari, yer üstündeki binanın gerçek mevcudiyetini sağlar. Ve bir binanın kaçınılmaz benzersizliğini kazandığı, mimarının kendine özgünlüğünün görünür hale geldiği ve anlaşılabilirliği yer üstündedir ki, binanın özgül ereği yegâne varlık biçimine kavuşur. Yer aynı zamanda bizimle ürettiğimiz nesne arasında uygun mesafenin kurulmasına olanak verir. Yer öylesine bütünüyle kaçınılmazdır ki, yer düşüncesini yadsıyan ve bağlam kavramını önemsemeyen mimarlar bile onu yapıtlarına dâhil etmeye zorlanırlar ve sonuç olarak bir yer icat etmeye mecbur kalırlar. Son zamanlardaki kurmaca bir geçmiş ya da zemin yaratma veya üstüne önceden belirlenmiş bir mimariyi yerleştirmek için icat edilmiş bir arkeolojik alan keşfetme girişimleri bundandır. Çünkü her türlü mimarının kökeninde yer vardır. Mimari onun üstünde yaratılır ve sonuç olarak öznitelikleri, varlığı yerle yakından ilişkili hale gelir. Yer, mimarının bulunduğu yerdir. Mimari ‘herhangi bir yer’de olamaz”.



The search for “place” in the field of architecture is mostly announced in the form of manifests. In his “Six Themes for the Next Millennium”, Pallasmaa discusses a so-called ambiguity in “the role and essence of architecture”, which he claims can be detected in reference to the recent “bewildering interest in theorising and verbal explanation of architectural meanings and intentions” in both architecture and some other disciplines (Pallasmaa, 1994, 74). As Pallasmaa states, “Architecture is nervously seeking its self-definition and autonomy in the embrace of the culture of consumption, which tends to turn it into a commodity and entertainment” (Pallasmaa, 1994, 74). On the other hand, he criticizes architecture’s escape from “social reality” and its becoming “self-referential and self-motivated”; as he asks: “Why are narcissism and self-indulgence replacing empathy and social conscience?” (Pallasmaa, 1994, 74).

Pallasmaa’s above mentioned notice is related to what he names the uncertainties of architecture and as he notices, these uncertainties can be understood via the understanding of the current “cultural condition”.<sup>63</sup> As he states:

The compression of time-space and the consequent flatness of experience has caused a curious fusion of these two dimensions; **the spatialisation of time and the temporalization of space**. Instantaneity and the collapse of time horizons have reduced our experience to a series of unrelated presents. Also the production of commodities has placed emphases on instantaneity and disposability, novelty and fashion, and this development has expanded to the realm of values, life-styles, cultural products and architecture (Pallasmaa, 1994, 75). [Emphasis added by the author of the thesis]

Architecture’s meeting with the above mentioned phenomena of fashion, commodity, ephemerality, etc., devalues the notion of “place”. We may consider that the very apparent discussions about the preservation of historic or traditional areas, and the aspects of “thematization” and “spaces of consumption” are all based in relation to the need and search for real places. As Gottdiener who offered numerous studies on “thematization” and “spaces of consumption” states, “Advanced, Late Capitalist

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<sup>63</sup> “Time space compression” coined by David Harvey in his book “The Condition of Postmodernity” is addressed by Pallasmaa in this respect.

society, in particular, is increasingly themed and franchised” (Gottdiener, 2000, ?). As is further suggested, in relation to “the growth and importance of tourism to economies” and “the increasingly complex problem of capital *realization* in a society dominated by a bewildering and abundant excess of goods”,

...investment in the built environment has increasingly taken the form of themed and purposefully constructed spaces that facilitate consumption. Increasingly, too, everyday life within the multi-centred region is played out within these various consumer spaces, like megamalls, as they have replaced earlier forms of public space, such as the town square (Gottdiener, 2000, ?).<sup>64</sup>

It is the current cultural condition, as Pallasmaa offers, which “renders the emergence of profound architecture as difficult”. The ephemeral, the fashionary, the ready for consumption, momentary, etc., all define one’s experience to the built environment and as one can claim, those issues related with the construction of fashionary, momentary and ephemeral experience interfere with the very characteristics of “place” in architecture. Such an architecture does not want to strike roots. Hence, within these considerations, the idea of “place” becomes injured via the governing of its basic components such as time, space (as location) and the human activities. Within these respects, architectural profession should ask some basic essential questions for today’s condition, as is suggested by Pallasmaa:

...can architecture define a credible social and cultural goal for itself; can architecture be rooted in culture in order to create an experience of locality, place and identity; can architecture re-create a tradition, a shared ground which provides a basis for the criteria of authenticity and quality? (Pallasmaa, 2007, 42)

Considering the style-based approaches triggered by the “universalizing tendencies of scientific rationality”, “industrial processes”, “the globalization of lifestyle, cultural

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<sup>64</sup> Gottdiener also mentions about shifts in paradigms in the capitalist society and add: “While the information economy progresses to an increasing degree of disembodied spacelessness, the producers of knowledge still require specific locations or spaces to work. In short, our new economy will function in this respect very much like the old one with persisting need for adequate design of the built environment. The coupling of new production sites and increasingly themed consumer venues has already altered the Late Capitalist landscape. Space and these kinds of spatial relations will continue to be important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

values, and fashion” together with nationalist or thematizing regional attitudes as dangerous for the essence of architecture; Pallasmaa claims that the main escape route from that “style” is offered by the issues of “autonomy” and “poetry” where “...a *regionalism of the mind* rather than of geography, an ethical stance rather than any stylistic preference” is needed:

Instead of aestheticizing our domicile, the task of architecture is to mediate our relation with the world, to manifest our existence and project specific horizons of experiencing and understanding our being-in-the-world (Pallasmaa, 2007, 42).

Architectural theorist Alberto Pérez Gómez suggests about a similar attitude. From his point of view, while “meaningful architecture” is considered to depict only “efficient building” in relation to the issues of technology and universalization (putting the idea of “global village”), still, “place” considers the means of our relationship with the world and we can inherently make sense of a place through its qualities:

Yet, even within the very heart of a North American secularized village, the mystery at the origins of human technique emerges. Our reason may be capable of dismissing the quality of the built environment as central to our spiritual well-being, yet our dreams and our actions are always set *in place*, and our understanding of others and ourselves would be impossible without significant places. Our bodies can recognize and understand – despite our so-called “scientific common sense and its Cartesian isotropic space – the wisdom embodied in a place, in a culture, and its profound, untranslatable expressive qualities. With little effort we can recognize how architecture, in those rare places that speak back to us and resonate with our dreams, incites us to meditation, personal thought, and imagination, and thus opens up the “space of desire” that allows us to be “at home”, while, of course, always remaining “incomplete” and open to our most durable human characteristic: death (Pérez Gómez, 2007, 120).

“Place” is an essential component in the establishment of people’s bonds with the earth, through which one can develop a sense of belonging. As Mugerauer states, people need places where a sense of belonging to the community and self, nature and the sacred can be adopted. Within this consideration, “the planning, design, and building” play significant roles, as they “would help enable the new mode of belonging to happen” (Mugerauer, 1994, 163). Architecture and related design

activities may be referred to in the transformation and control of this adoption. As Mugerauer puts, “the individual self and community, in order to become fully themselves, need placement in relation to the containing natural and spiritual realms” (Mugerauer, 1994, 165). In that respect, in relation to the role of architecture and planning,

How would we design in order to regain a sound relationship to the natural environment, to the rhythms of the heavens and earth? Could we learn again to harmonize with the seasons and the attendant cycles of birth, growth, and death of plants and animals by experiencing them in parks, or in yards and community gardens, or . . . ? Could we again become attuned to the sky, say at night, which now is almost totally absent from our focal experience, by somehow attending newly to the stars and moon and tides and nocturnal animal life? How could that be done with safety, in a real, dense city? (Mugerauer, 1994, 165-6).

Clearly, the possibility of our originary recovery of a profound communal, natural, and spiritual environment and life requires a new mode of architecture and planning as well as urban design (Mugerauer, 1994, 166).

Within this respect, “design on behalf of place” – coined by Mugerauer – is an important term to dwell on. Reviewing the work of Aalto, van Eyck, Kahn, Alexander, and many others in an attempt to decipher the “originary foundations”, Mugerauer conceptualizes some guiding principles for the sake of providing “belonging and mutual understanding” for future planning and design through facilitating “design for personal well-being” and “design without cultural or environmental displacement” (Mugerauer, 1994, 166). As can be summarized, the steps include:

1. Consideration of the human condition, the patterns in people’s lives, the need of people...
2. The understanding, evaluation, and enhancement of “the ecological rhythms of earth and sky” in relation to the inhabitants.
3. “responding to and carefully adapting traditional elements”, “preserving and yet appropriately developing them – from inside live traditions, so that new forms, materials, and processes allow continual renewal and enrichment, as opposed to the disruption, consumption, and rejection of the past”.
4. collaboration with inhabitants and design professionals

5. “seeking creative new ways to see and understand people and their worlds more sensitively and fully”<sup>65</sup> (Mugerauer, 1994, xvi and 183).

As can be considered, Mugerauer emphasizes the understanding of physical context together with the condition of human through communicative action and highlights the importance of full engagement upon people’s world. As Mugerauer puts further about planning and design in relation to “originary thinking and interpretation” (“creative participation”):

Clearly, planning, architecture, building, and originary interpretation belong together. *Planning and design are informed by careful and caring understanding* of human nature, of our cultural and individual displacements, and of their own role in accomplishing or hindering the building of place. Thoughtful description and *interpretation* of place and the possibilities of our building unavoidably *occur in the midst of an already given – already built – environment*. The promise: self-critical and originary environmental interpretation, planning, design, and building can help to open places where we may become more fully ourselves by belonging together with each other and the world (Mugerauer, 1994, 184).

Another recent manifest in relation to “place” is introduced by Tadao Ando with his “Beyond Horizons in Architecture”. Firstly, positioned as a late modernist by Jencks & Kroph, Ando believes in the itinerary of “development through and beyond modernism”, and as he puts,

Architectural thought is supported by abstract logic. By abstract I mean to signify a meditative exploration that arrives at a crystallization of the complexity and richness of the world, rather than a reduction of its reality through diminishing its concreteness. Were not the best aspects of modernism produced by such architectural thinking? (Ando, 1991, 458).

Though stated as a recent approach, Ando’s evaluations of nature and *genius loci* that will be mentioned in the following lines goes back to his writings of 1980s. He seems to be driven by the universalist and globalist tendencies of these years which correspond to the third type of “internationalism” (as mentioned before in reference to Gregotti) that would differ from the past ones in the way capitalism, technology and

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<sup>65</sup> Mugerauer, 1994, xvi and 183. For the last comment, the author refers to the work of Gordon Cullen for his visualization of townscape, Thomas Thiis-Evensen for his phenomenological interpretations, Christopher Alexander for his pattern language, etc.

mass communication were introduced to the everyday life of city and citizens through immense conditions. In this respect, Ando's architecture is like many other place-based approaches reactional. Considering universalization and its by-products standardization and generalization, as Ando states:

Behind the promotion of the universalization of architecture is the idea that functionality equals economic rationality. The principle of simple economic rationality does away with the rich, cultural aspect of architecture. Similar buildings are being constructed throughout the world, and cities are losing their individuality to become ominously monotonous (Ando, 1996b, 450).

Also, we shall note that being considered as a late-modernist, or one of the last modernists,<sup>66</sup> Ando evaluates postmodernist movement's rejection of modernism as "capricious", as he evaluates post-modernism as the "old wine in new bottles" (Ando, 1996b, 450). Influenced by both Heideggerian issues of being-in-the-world and modernism's originary ideals, Ando establishes the "in-between".<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, defining the doing of architecture as a "critical action", Ando states that "architectural creation involves contemplating the origins and essence of a project's functional requirements and the subsequent determination of its essential issues" (Ando, 1991, 256).

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<sup>66</sup> M. Zardini, "A Note on Tadao Ando", Tadao Ando, Londra, 1990, 15 cited in Güzer, 2000, 42. Güzer's article "Modernizmin Son Savaşçısı" ("The Last Warrior of Modernism") also positions Ando as one of the last modernists.

<sup>67</sup> Frampton uses this term for the basis of his "critical regionalism".



**Figure 9:** Rokko Housing One, Tadao Ando; Rokko, Hyōgo Prefecture, Japan, 1983.<sup>68</sup>  
Source: [http://www.cse.polyu.edu.hk/~cecspoon/lwbt/Case\\_Studies/Rokoo/wm\\_ando05.JPG](http://www.cse.polyu.edu.hk/~cecspoon/lwbt/Case_Studies/Rokoo/wm_ando05.JPG)  
(accessed on 08.08.2008)

Other than the modernist use of geometry and material, “nature” and the “site” stand as an important consideration for Ando in the way that what they “seek” constitutes the “essences” that architectural imagination searches for, as he suggests:

The presence of architecture – regardless of its self contained character – inevitably creates a new landscape. This implies the necessity of discovering the architecture which the site itself is seeking ...

I compose the architecture by seeking an essential logic inherent in the place. The architectural pursuit implies a responsibility to find and draw out a site’s formal characteristics, along with its cultural conditions, climate, and natural environmental features, the city structure that forms its backdrop, and the living patterns and age-old customs that people will carry into the future. Without sentimentality, I aspire to transform place through architecture to the level of the abstract and universal. Only in this

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<sup>68</sup> The building settles on the topography via terraces and the housing units are arranged for view without interfering with each other. Güzer suggests that “Rokko Housing” shows Ando’s position in relation to strict modernism, according to Güzer, Ando transforms Le Corbusier’s “Unite d’Habitation”’s loneliness into a friendship with nature and topography (Güzer, 2000, 45).

way can architecture repudiate the realm of industrial technology to become 'grand art' in its truest sense (Ando, 1991, 258).

"Nature" is, for Ando, a significant element that should be participated into the urban condition for the sake of enhancing the flow of *genius loci*; according to Ando, "the elements of nature – water, wind, light, and sky – bring architecture derived from ideological thought down to the ground level of reality and awaken man-made life within it" (Ando, 1991, 258).

On the whole, Ando's manifest "Beyond Horizons in Architecture" of 1991 tells us more together with his "Genius Loci" of 1992. As can be conveyed, Ando has a phenomenological insight which is clear in his writings. He poetically describes *genius loci*, in that age when its utterance is not so wellcomed. Establishing the corpus of *genius loci* with the "earth" and "history", Ando mentions about that modernism's once run away from the earth and ignorance of history, and he states that bearing structurally capital flow is what illustrates the task of the architecture of today (Ando, 1992, 12-13). In reaction to this situation, Ando asks for another flow for the task of architecture; that idea of movement is what Ando claims as crucial for the very nature of *genius loci*, as it is not a static entity but always influx within the transformation of the earth and history (Ando, 1992, 12-13). As Ando suggests:

The real world is complex and contradictory. At the core of architectural creation is the transformation of the concreteness of the through transparent logic into spatial order. This is not an eliminative abstraction but, rather, an attempt at the organization of the real around an intrinsic viewpoint to give it order through abstract power. The starting point of an architectural problem – whether place, nature, lifestyle, or history – is expressed within this development into the abstract. Only an effort of this nature will produce a rich and variable architecture... (Ando, 1991, 257).

His "inbetween" position that regards the establishment of modernist ideals in "the real world" is noticable. In relation to the "inbetweenness", we may refer to Güzer's description of Ando's work. Defining his architecture as to be composed by four elements which are geometry, nature, material, and light, he underscores the existence



of a modernist fate enhanced with uniqueness<sup>69</sup> (Güzer, 2000, 42-4). Güzer further asks whether Ando's unique architecture may be labelled under the title of "timelessness", a term which is used by Norberg-Schulz in a similar context<sup>70</sup> (Güzer, 2000, 42-43). Ando is cited in *AD* under the title of "A New Spirit in Architecture"<sup>71</sup> of 1991 for the fact that he can not be moulded into certain stylistic categories (Güzer, 2000, 42-43). On the whole, Ando's appreciation of nature and the real world, as mentioned in the previous paragraph seems to build up that discourse of uniqueness of his *œuvre*. To evaluate the above mentioned quotation, according to Ando, the abstract in architecture gains its departure from "the real world" which may offer insight to the architect on occasion, as the point of departure may include "place", "nature", "lifestyle" or "history".

#### **4.2 A Framework for "Place" Bound Design in Architecture**

Keeping those above mentioned comments and questions in mind; within the boundary of this thesis, "place" and its identification is seen as a task in architecture's agenda and it is believed that this identification depicts the architect's "sensitivity to local place and genuine dwelling" (Mugerauer, 1994, 183), a sensitivity that may enhance the possibility of "place" bound design.

"Place" is not a solely receiving ground, as suggested by Moneo; he is opposed to such a devaluation of "place" since its consideration as solely foundational earth gives harm to the presence of any intimate relationship between building and its setting (Moneo, 1992, 4). In a broader sense, this harm may be considered to be given also to the relationship between man and earth. Within this context, Moneo's ranking

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<sup>69</sup> That uniqueness may be comprehended as to be immersed in space and time, namely place.

<sup>70</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz's article "The New Tradition" of 1991, published in *AD* (No.87, 92-96) is given credit for the conception of "timelessness" in Papadakis, 1991, 7 and Güzer, 2000, 42. As Papadakis suggest, Norberg-Schulz's interpretation utilizes a "Modern" language instead of a vernacular one; in this respect, he searches for an architecture which illustrates "the dynamism of modernity" together with the "need of a 'timeless' built environment" (Papadakis, 1991, 7).

<sup>71</sup> "A persistent questioning of the direction that contemporary architecture should be taking today", states the editor of the issue, Andreas Papadakis, constitutes the theme of the magazine. (Papadakis, 1991, 7)

of “place” or “physical location” as the very first ground that the architect can reflect his ideas by means of architectural thinking, in respect to his positioning within the physical environment, is shared within this thesis.

It is argued within this thesis that, in creating or identifying places, the physical condition / location as one of the overlapping constituents of “place” seems to be the very first proposition to be gathered by the architect for identification and that its study may inform practice in various aspects.

It was mentioned before that most of the terms indicating physical location / condition are used interchangeably, whether true or not, and that for understanding and evaluating “place” as a concept, one should gather many components at one hand. To remember, notions indicating physical location or condition (as site, context, location, region, landscape, position, ...) do not seem to propose a well defined conceptual foundation in the discipline of architecture. While the terms defy easy definitions due to the complex connotations they offer in relation to broad issues embedded in the nature of relations between man and nature, the physical environment needs further study if we are to make up a framework for understanding and performing through the relevance and potential of “place” in the discourse of architectural design.

The understanding of “site” connotes importance within that respect. Putting “site” as the main subject matter through “relating a building to a physical location” – which is considered as a major task in architecture – Burns states that “the site is construed and finally achieved in the architectural work” and, hence, “site is received as an architectural construct” (Burns, 1991, 147). As Burns suggests about “siting” in architecture, besides its profundity in relation to the discipline, the term needs further theorization:

The problems attendant to siting have a pervasive and profound impact on buildings. Nonetheless, architectural theory and criticism have tended to address siting issues with descriptive or analytic references to specific exemplary projects. This approach exclusively reveals through circumstantial strategies the lack of a clear conceptual basis for the notion of site within architecture. Because of its intrinsic importance and

generative potential, the conceptual content of site must be made available for study and opened to question as a means to disclose and, ultimately, to challenge the motives and precepts of the discipline (Burns, 1991, 147).

Similarly, the significance of “context” in the amendment of our understanding of the relation between building and the earth in terms of “identification of place” was also mentioned before. Designing embedded in “place” – as we are embedded in the world – involves the consideration of “context” as a spectacular condition in architecture. While “context” has been given credit in contextualist attitudes in various references to certain assumptions of historicism or regionalism, as was mentioned before, it may well be incorporated to mean in existential terms. “Context” is what is given or what exists as a “conditioner” in the sense that it conditions our mediation with the earth. While not attempting to use the term “context” as a paradigmatic attitude, “contextual architecture”, as this thesis nominates simply within its boundaries, is an important consideration in relation to the idea of being embedded in place.

Having mentioned about the main key directions and words that will be considered to weight up an understanding of that mediation between man and world in terms of the activity of building; in order to propose a framework for place bound design in architecture, the study will firstly define “place” in relation to architecture and *vice versa* through considering architecture as “identification of place”. After that, the study will concern the reading of “place” as a basis for both understanding and performing. The physical location / condition, namely the “site” which is already presented as the first ground to dwell on will be our concern via the activity of “listening”. Defining, listening to and interpreting physical location/condition for an effective mission of architecture within developing a notion of dialogue is aimed to address various spheres.

#### 4.2.1 Defining “Place” and Architecture: Architecture as “Identification of Place”

As mentioned before, the very anthropological definition of “place” (“anthropological place”), as introduced by Marc Augé, was “the one occupied by the indigenous inhabitants who live in it, cultivate it, defend it, mark its strong points and keep its frontiers under surveillance” (Augé, 1995, 42). Further, his definition posed that “anthropological place” may be conceptualized as being “relational”, being “historical” and being “concerned with identity”. Considering this anthropological definition in mind, in the very general sense, “place” can be thought of its components which are interwoven within themselves. Looking at these components, besides “site” as the physical location to which natural and cultural elements are complemented, “space and time” stands to convey a uniqueness, as to remember Harvey’s “relational theory” of “space”, “time” and “place”. In addition, one should thirdly note “people’s activities” as an imminent “social” component in the consideration of “place”, as Relph depicted in his “Place and Placelessness”. In accordance with the definition of these elements, one may also put that “place” has a “historical component” as places are not static, but are in change.



**Figure 10:** Graphic illustrating the components of “place”.

As also mentioned before, the vision of placemaking in architecture was carried into the realm of architecture by mostly Relph and Norberg-Schulz. Relph's announcements on the issue of places and Norberg-Schulz's theorizations to put up a phenomenologically and existentially meaningful architecture made up different opposing groups in academia. Though being criticized in the name of "bad utopianism" (Aravot, 2002, 208)<sup>72</sup>, we can make sense of Norberg-Schulz's suggestion that a phenomenology of architecture can be analysed through firstly studying it in relationship to the nature (landscape) and then looking at the formal articulations and spatial characteristics. In relation to this context, observing the "matter of structure" in "concrete terms" in order to enhance a "realistic basis" with a focus on the issues of enclosure, structure, proportion, relationship to ground and sky may resonate for further study.<sup>73</sup>

Within a similar approach to that of Norberg-Schulz in relation to the creation of meaningful places, Simon Unwin, professor of Architecture in Dundee School of Architecture, incorporates "place" as a central term which finds its connotation through constituting the "working definition of architecture". In his book *Analyzing Architecture*, Unwin aims to "offer the beginnings of a framework for the analytical understanding of the workings of architecture" that aims to produce "practical and poetic settings for life" (Unwin, 2003, 10). Unwin further suggests about "the idea of architecture as a philosophical discipline that works not in words but through the organisation of the physical worlds." As he puts:

The mind tries to make sense of the world through philosophy, usually expressed in words; but it also makes sense of the world physically through architecture. Architecture, in that it sets the matrix within which

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<sup>72</sup> For the "bad utopianism", Aravot refers to Fredric Jameson, as he coins to criticize Norberg-Schulz's attitude because of the fact that "it [i.e. bad utopianism] asks for resurrection without paying the price; change without politics; transformation by simple persuasion and common sense— people will react directly to this beauty and demand it (whereas the argument started from the premise that people could no longer perceive fully in the first place). F. Jameson, "Is space political?", in C. Davidson ed., 1995, *Anyhow* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press) (106–121), 115 quoted in Aravot, 2002, 208.

<sup>73</sup> Terms in quotations are borrowed from Melhuish, 2005, 16. For inner quotations, see Norberg-Schulz, 1980.

lives are lived, is philosophical at a fundamental, though non-verbal, level (Unwin, 2003, 11).

That “philosophical” understanding of architecture has to do with defining the task of architecture. What is meant in that “architecture is fundamentally about place”? Unwin, in his book, begins with posing architecture as the “identification of place”. As he puts, “the fundamental motivation of architecture is to identify (recognise, amplify, create the identity of) places”.

It is somehow difficult to think about architecture and to define its nature and to ask what purposes does it have within its nature. Noting on the unansweredness on the definition and purpose of architecture, Unwin attempts to begin with that difficulty inherent in the discipline and asks: “What is architecture?” & “Why do we do it?” (Unwin, 2003, 21). In that respect, firstly, the question “what is architecture?” is attempted to be answered by means of defining it as a “conceptual organisation”, an “intellectual structure”.<sup>74</sup> As he further puts, “this is a definition of architecture that is applicable to all kinds of examples, from simple rustic buildings, through grand public edifices, to formal urban settings” (Unwin, 2003, 22). Secondly, asking the question “why do we do it?”, Unwin refers to “place” and its creation as a central notion; as he puts, the answer of such a question lies in the heart / process of place-making (Unwin, 2003, 22). To illustrate his argument, he gives example of a prehistoric family’s experience:

Imagine a prehistoric family making its way through a landscape unaffected by human activity. They decide to stop, and as the evening draws on they light a fire. By doing so, whether they intend to stay there permanently or just for one night, they have established a *place*. The fire-place is for the time being the centre of their lives. As they go about the business of living they make more places, subsidiary to the fire: a place to

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<sup>74</sup> Within that context, Unwin firstly attempts to define architecture through developing an understanding of its meaning in regard to its use in other disciplines. Musicology constitutes his point of departure in that respect. As he puts: “In musicology the ‘architecture’ of a symphony can be said to be the conceptual organisation of its parts into a whole, its intellectual structure” (Unwin, 2003, 22). In regard to that consideration, Unwin evaluates the following understanding as constituting “the root definition of architecture”: “Here, the architecture of a building, or a group of buildings, a city, a garden ... is considered to be its *conceptual organisation*, its *intellectual structure*” (Unwin, 2003, 22).

store fuel; a place to sit; a place to sleep; perhaps they surround these places with a fence; perhaps they shelter their sleeping place with a canopy of leaves. From their choice of the site onwards they have begun the evolution of the house; they have begun to organise the world around them into places they use for a variety of purposes. They have begun to do architecture (Unwin, 2003, 22).

That illustration of the *lifeworld* of this prehistoric family suddenly raises the author's definition of architecture together with its purposes. In that respect, "to organise the world" into "places" "for a variety of purposes" is the answer that Unwin proposes to the above mentioned questions. Within such a consideration, "place" becomes a central concept in the very happening of architecture. As Unwin states, the "identification of place" is a major task in architecture:

The idea that identification of place lies at the generative core of architecture can be explored and illustrated further. In doing this, one can think of architecture, not as a language, but as being in some ways like one (Unwin, 2003, 22-23).

Place is to architecture, it may be said, as meaning is to language. Meaning is the essential burden of language, place is the essential burden of architecture (Unwin, 2003, 23).

...architecture is participated in by more than the individual. ... architecture depends upon contributions from many. The idea of architecture as identification of place asserts the indispensable part played in architecture by the user as well as the designer. And for the designer, who will listen, it suggests that places proposed should accord with places used, even if it takes time for this to happen (Unwin, 2003, 23)

The lived world – space, existentially, is important for architecture conceived as "identification of place". As Unwin, who is also influenced by Heidegger, states: "At its rudimentary level architecture deals not in abstractions but with life as it is lived, and its fundamental power is to identify place" (Unwin, 2003, 24). Within that context, privileging "place" as constituting the "working definition of architecture", as Unwin puts: "Place is the *sine qua non* of architecture. We relate to the world through the mediation of place. Situating ourselves is an a priori requisite of our existence" (Unwin, 2003, 24). As Unwin defines "place":

'place' is where the mind touches the world;

a 'place' is a configuration of architectural elements that seems (to the mind informed by its senses) to accommodate, or offer the possibility of accommodation to an object, a person, an activity, a mood...;

'places' mediate between life and the world it inhabits;

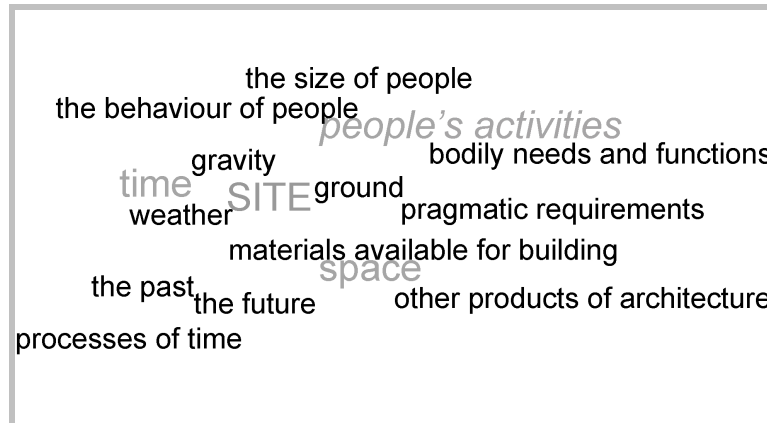
through identifying 'places', and organising them, we make sense of the world we inhabit. (Unwin, 2003, 25)

Within these definitions, architecture possesses/captures "place" as a central way of both **"understanding"** the relation between man and environment, and **"performing"** by means of the creation of relationships. The definitions are likely to rely on "place" as a focus in man-environment relationships, and its consideration (through its identification) connotes importance as being part of the task of architecture that is "embedded" in the "lifeworld".

If place is the mediation between human being and the world and if we are to put up an understanding of the processes of identification of "place", the way that the context of the earth conditions us in our making sense of it through architecture may be surrogated upon the conditions that the world offers. The theory and practice of architecture gives presence to the relations between building and the earth. Within this context, as Unwin summarizes, "in trying to understand the powers of architecture one must also be aware of the conditions within which they are applied", as "...architecture is not a free art of the mind...the processes of architecture are applied in (or on) a real world with real characteristics..." (Unwin, 2003, 25).

"The ground", "gravity", "weather", "materials available for building", "the size of people, and of other creatures", "bodily needs and functions of people and maybe other creatures", "the behaviour of people", "other products of architecture", "pragmatic requirements", "the past", "the future" and "the processes of time" are stated to be among the various conditions that the "designing mind" should deal with (Unwin, 2003, 110).





**Figure 11:** Graphic illustrating the conditions of architecture in relation to Unwin's consideration.

Within this consideration, noting the relevance of space and time as agents, we can talk about the “real (material) world” and the “condition of human” as the basic categorization. It is also crucial to note that while there are “other general themes that condition the operation of architecture” (Unwin, 2003, 25) (as political-social conditions or power relations) which makes it complex to handle the issue in easy grasp, still, man-environment relationships evaluated under the title of “making sense of the world” may provide ample room for the study & practice of architecture in relation to “place”. It is apparent that the conditions of architecture also constitute the components of “place” (as site enhanced with people’s activities) in relation to “space” and “time”.

#### **4.2.2 Reading “Place”: Listening to the “Site”**

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, other than common grounded movements, discussions over the notion of “place” have been established through “polarizations”, a process which has given rise to pairs of words in the form of “binary opposites” or opposed polarities (Ulusu Uraz & Balamir, 2006, 3).<sup>75</sup> Within

<sup>75</sup> The authors mentions further oppositions as: “continuity vs. rupture” with sub-oppositions of “imitation vs. innovation”, “tradition vs. modernity”, “unity vs. diversity”, and “locality vs.

these polarities, “place” vs. “non-place” or “place” vs. “space” proposes the very first opposition (Ulusu Uraz & Balamir, 2006, 3).<sup>76</sup> It is, in fact, this binary opposition between “place” and “space” which directed most of the debates and theorizations over the two concepts.

What rises at the moment as an important consideration within this opposition is the opposed polarity between “reading” and “analyzing” which denote respectively certain methodological understandings towards the comprehension of “place” and “space”. The activity of place-based reading may provide room for the provision of methodological understanding towards a framework of putting up theorization and informing practice in the name of “place”.

To put once more, it is the “reading” of the physical environs rather than “analyzing” that is due to consideration in place-based thinking if we are to remember phenomenology. The “reading of architecture and urban form”, as Porter puts, is very much attached to the “practice of place making” (Porter, 1999, 18). Within this respect, Italian architect Giancarlo de Carlo is given due reference for the establishment of “reading” as a key aspect in place-based considerations.<sup>77</sup> As de Carlo mentions about “reading”:

Reading is not the same as analysis or survey. The notions of analysis and survey are both based on neutrality. Their results are credible if their approach and development have been made in a vacuum of values; value

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universality”; “conformity vs. freedom” with sub-oppositions of “objective vs. subjective”, “collective vs. subjective”, “collective vs. individual”, “conformity vs. individuation” and “obedience vs. liberation”; and “analysis vs. reading” with sub-oppositions of “time vs. occasion”, “program vs. event”, “abstraction vs. materiality”, “form vs. meaningful content”, “order vs. character” and “structure vs. tectonics”, the terms gathered from various sources from Trancik, Norberg-Schulz, van Eyck, Meiss, Raman and Vidler. For sources, see Ulusu Uraz & Balamir, 2006, 5 (footnote 11).

<sup>76</sup> The concept of “non-place”, as was marked by Marc Augé, does not necessarily point out placelessness. As Sözer mentions, Augé’s conception of “non-place” is formed in reference to Michel de Certeau’s conception of space, where “place” indicates stops (or “pauses” in Yi Fu Tuan’s term) and space indicates “movement” in opposition to “place” (Sözer, 2002).

<sup>77</sup> Porter gives reference to the contributions of Giancarlo de Carlo for his “deep understanding of urban form”, his “provocative buildings”, his “writings in *Spazio e Società*” and his “extraordinary leadership of the International Laboratory for Architecture and Urban Design (ILAUD)” (Porter, 1999, 21).

judgments, if necessary, come later, when the analysis and – or the survey are accomplished.

The notion of reading, on the contrary, is based on commitment, and this implies values. I like to say (paradoxically, of course) that reading, to really be sharp, needs to be sectarian, meaning that while reading, one has to hold in mind how what is being read could be transformed. In other words, “reading” means to explore and comprehend specific situations of the physical space with a designing mind (de Carlo, 1999, 51).

As Porter suggests about “reading” in reference to the work of de Carlo:

...effective reading requires purpose, a designing frame of mind and, probably, having designs in mind, however tentative they may be. Moreover, reading has values embedded, both conscious and unconscious (Porter, 1999, 18).

As can be measured, reading necessitates the full engagement of the reader who has also his/her background of value judgments. It is also within this respect that reading may also be considered as “interpreting”, an activity that finds its existence through the responsibility of an interpreter” (Ulusu Uraz & Balamir, 2006, 4). Reading of a place is the search of meanings apparent in it. It necessitates being sensitive to stimulations; reading goes parallel with the architect’s “sensitivity to local place and genuine dwelling” (Mugerauer, 1994, 183). As UlusU Uraz & Balamir inform, “place is said to be opaque to positive analysis, requiring foremost, a reading of its textual entities: its material substance, character and emotional presence” (UlusU Uraz & Balamir, 2006, 4).

“Character” stands to constitute importance in the name of uniqueness. Considered as an “adjective” in relation to the concept of “place” as a “noun” by Christian Norberg-Schulz (as was mentioned before), “character” is conceptualized by Trancik as comprising of two concerns: “concrete things having material substance, shape, texture and colour” and more “intangible cultural associations, a certain patina given by human use over time” (Trancik, 1986, 112-3).

“Space”, as suggested by Norberg-Schulz to be denoted by “prepositions”, is considered further: “While types of space can be defined by categories or typologies

based on physical properties, each place is unique, taking on the character or *Stimmung* of its surroundings” (Trancik, 1986, 112-3). It is at this time that we should remember that “place” designated and defined by means of “nouns” with the concept of character defined in “adjective” form proposes each “place” as a “unique” entity open to unique “readings”.

As Gregotti cited in Meiss and Ulusu Uraz & Balamir suggests, reading of a place (site or town) “ranges from the identification of the formal structural characteristics of groupings and subgroupings, to the historic process which has influenced their creation, and from the inventory of materials to their characteristics of form, texture and color”.<sup>78</sup> Based upon Gregotti’s definition of reading, we have the interaction of the main components of “place” in hand to read. Defining “place” as the togetherness of the human context and physical context enhanced with time / locality, as this thesis argues, reading of a “place” may be comprehended within two main activities: (1) defining and (2) listening (interpreting), where such an understanding can inform practice and theory of “place” in architecture.

Before dealing with the activities of reading of a “place” through defining and listening, we shall dwell further on the nature of “reading”. We have already defined “reading” of a place as the search of meanings apparent in it. At that point, “meaning” awaits to be given attention, as it constitutes the very essence of place-based understanding.

While “meaning” is one of the other “difficult” words of the discourse on “place”, we can gather an understanding of the concept of “meaning” by remembering the phenomenological insight that the built environment and the person are immersed in an undissolvable unity. That is, we may position “meaning” at somewhere between the world and us. Meaning is what stays “there” in the existence of the subject who gives it attention. “We” give meanings to “certain” things by “experiencing” them.

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<sup>78</sup> Vittorio Gregotti, 1982, *Le Territoire de L’Architecture* (Paris: L’Equerre) cited in von Meiss, 1990, 145 and Ulusu Uraz & Balamir, 2006, 5.

The nature of the process of attaching meanings through experience constitutes importance in that respect.

Within this frame, reference will be given to Porter, who frames an understanding of reading places in relation to individual and contextual experiential conditions in his article “Re-reading”. Firstly, Porter refers to Leonard Meyer’s *Emotion and Meaning in Music* for his description of “how to experience an artistic artifact” (Porter, 1999, 18).<sup>79</sup>

Two types of meanings are gathered by Porter in reference to Leonard Meyer: “embodied meaning” and “designative meaning”. As Porter suggests, in relation to the above mentioned definition of meaning as pointing out a connection between “a conscious observer” and an object, “if that to which the object refers is distant and different, the meaning is, in Meyer’s term, *designative*”; “if that to which the object refers is the same as itself, the meaning is what Meyer terms *embodied*” (Porter, 1999, 18).<sup>80</sup>

In order to depict “meanings”, Porter makes an exemplary reading upon the image and experience of stairs in the “meditation mound of the Woodland Cemetery” in Stockholm. The author emphasizes that the reading of that built environment relies on the “experiencing” by the self and is “reinforced” with one’s “knowledge” (from anywhere) (Porter, 1999, 18). To quote from his readings over the cemetery:

Pay special attention in the image to the stairs that lead up the mound. Notice that the slope changes as you near the top. The length of the tread is held constant, but the height of the riser diminishes. Because your body expects a riser of full height, you put more energy into the step than it can accommodate. This creates a misfit between your experience and bodily motion.

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<sup>79</sup> As Morris R. Cohen who is cited in Meyer for the definition of meaning states, “Anything acquires meaning if it is connected with or indicates or refers to something beyond itself, so that its full nature points to and is revealed in that connection”. Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1956) in Porter, 1999, 18

<sup>80</sup> Porter states that contemporary buildings mostly convey designative meanings, “having little other effect on the observer”. “Too often in writings about architecture, meaning has been associated with designative meaning alone”. Porter, 1999, 18.

As you approach the top, you almost float, as though you could depart the earth in some way, a rather extraordinary projection of self into another state triggered by meaning embodied in the actual steps themselves. You feel that this is the place where the body is transformed into the spirit, or where the spirit leaves the body and moves toward the sky. You see the mound as transformative: both a source of life (a swelling womb) and a burial place for the body once the spirit has departed. This reading is reinforced by your knowledge of the importance of such mounds in Scandinavia and elsewhere from primitive times (Porter, 1999, 18).



**Figure 12:** Stairway, Woodland Cemetery, Stockholm. Photo: William L. Porter  
Source: William L. Porter, 1999, “Re: Reading [Forming Place, Informing Practice]”, *Places*, 12, 3. <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ced/places/vol12/iss3/WilliamLPorter>, 19.

The very bodily experience together with one’s background knowledge enhances the building up of embodied meanings. This process illustrates what we “gather” as “meaning” to attach to certain places. “Meaning” within this respect finds relevance through the provision of our full engagement; a critical positioning whether to read (for informing practice) or experience a place.

Other than the individual’s own engagement through the bodily existence (“engagement in the locale” as called by Porter), “contextual engagement” is further suggested by Porter as to deal with the other general “conditions that surround or impinge upon the object of our attention” (Porter, 1999, 20). Within this respect,

“communication” and “co-construction” are presented as keywords for “tapping these contexts” (Porter, 1999, 20).

“Communication” is, in a very general sense, suggested as being aware of the fact that “people construct their own worlds out of their own experience and the materials that are available”, while “co-construction” opens a mediatory pool of “a shared and creative enterprise” for the building works of different builders, whether they are architects or not (Porter, 1999, 21). “Communication” suggests being aware of the differences inbetween different understandings while “co-construction”, being reactional to “expert culture”, denotes an alliance inbetween designers and others – who know, live, create and recreate places – through a common interference; in this way, the two point out a common language and dialogue over the creation of the built environment for a better understanding of “place” (Porter, 1999, 20-21).

To summarize Porter’s suggestions, the importance of constituting embodied experience in the offering of “a platform or a wide range of potential interpretations and associations” (to give people chance to construct “their” meanings) should be kept in mind in order to forcefully put up a relation with the body, as “embodied meaning has such a direct connection to the body and psychological processes” (Porter, 1999, 19). As he puts:

...where the embodied meaning has been powerfully coupled to potential designative meanings, the extraordinary impact is shared and there is intersubjective understanding. In buildings that merely refer and that do not forge the link with embodied experience, meaning is far more restrictive, idiosyncratic and trivial (Porter, 1999, 19).

As has been measured, engagement in the locale through possessing embodied meanings requires the bodily experience of the self. To understand – build up meanings already there in the locale necessitates the participation of the interpreter in full engagement. As was mentioned before in relation to Seamon’s consideration, in phenomenological means, the intentions of the researcher or interpreter is what actually triggers the phenomenological research process. To be “sensitive” to all

kinds of data in relation to a locale is considerable within that respect, while it is not an easy task to prescribe in detail.

Furthermore, basically pointing out the human or social context in place-based understanding, reading in the form of individualistic (personal) engagement and contextual engagement enriched with the missions of understanding and communication will inform the practice of place making. On the whole, we should also note that meaning is not something that can directly be attached by images or historical references. It is very much between “us” and the “place” that we are to define, listen, interpret or tentatively propose.

#### **4.2.2.1 Defining the “Site”: “To Accept or to Change”**

The significance of “site” in relation to “place” and architecture has already been mentioned. It is argued that “site” provides “context” for both the activity and the theory of architecture – that is “architectural design”. Within this respect, our subject is the architectural understanding of the “site” through its contextual offerings. What does / can “site” in the name of “place” constitute for architectural design?

It has been mentioned before that despite their continual existence in practical means, theoretical notions of “site” and hence “place” have transgressed into the realm of architectural discourse through a provision of awareness towards meanings and values; as Burns states from one point of view:

As the awareness of the relationship between cultural production and the local circumstances of material practice has come to the fore, attention to site has begun to frame the problem of making and interpreting architecture (Burns, 1991, 149).

That being incorporated to the “problem of making and interpreting architecture” makes “site” and “context” basically a design problem. Considering architectural design as a “synthetic, total activity”, Gülgönen emphasizes that in designing, “the main problem is to define for each case, each problem, its specific givens” (Gülgönen,



2001, 98). As Gülgönen further suggests, the design process includes two dimensions that are in relation to each other; (1) contextual and (2) conceptual (Gülgönen, 2001, 98). Within the author's approach, contextual dimension consists of two components, (1) "physical context" pointing the "where?" and (2) "social context" pointing the "for whom?" (Gülgönen, 2001, 98). Including the reminiscence of both the built environment and people, contextual dimension is worth further exploring. As is stated, "*the contextual approach* is not the analysis of a context but a search for the poetical dimensions of a specific place" (Gülgönen, 2001, 98). Within this context, our intentions that set the limits of our engagement with the physical world of the basic elements and conditions of architecture come into prominence.

In relation to this understanding, it may be said, "to accept" or "to change" is suggested by Unwin to suggest our relationship / position to the world; a situation which sounds as well for architecture "where the designing mind has to engage directly with the world" (Unwin, 2003, 109). As Unwin puts: "the designing mind is faced with its double question, 'What should one try to change; and what should one accept as it is?'" as is further acknowledged:

In this question, architecture is philosophy (in a conventional sense). It is to do with trying to understand how the world works and what the response should be. There is no single correct answer but a mixture of wondering and assertion, considering which factors impinge on a situation and how they should be dealt with (Unwin, 2003, 109).

It is within this respect that Burns mentions about two opposed terms through architectural design's responsive character to the site: "the cleared site" and "the constructed site". "Cleared site" defined as "a veiled attempt to remove itself from the human condition" metaphorically posits abstract attitudes on physical environment aiming to convey certain meanings through "self-expression"; as Burns comments, "denying any relationship to existing conditions, the architecture of the cleared site presumes power to initiate and finalize the site in both spatial and temporal terms" (Burns, 1991, 152-3). As the author puts, within this attitude, "the past is denied and the future is deemed powerless to change the situation":

...a real site cannot be removed from human time. the space of the site is made by humans and is by necessity political; any piece of land subject to human attention becomes charged with power and mechanisms. This is the meaning or content that humans bring to nature, that architecture must bring to the site (Burns, 1991, 152-3)

“Constructed site”, on the other hand, as Burns suggests, “emphasizes the visible physicality, morphological qualities, and existing conditions of land and architecture”; a positioning where “visible material” are mostly valued than any other aspect, “building and setting are seen to be shaped through obviously physical processes” of mainly “appropriation” instead of intentional and innovational design process (Burns, 1991, 153-4). It is due to this emphasis on evaluation on the physical and the visible that the approach is criticized; as “site” – or “place” – may have other values or qualities, in relation to “the history” or “the poetics of a place” (Burns, 1991, 154).

At that moment, the responsibility of the architect comes into discussion. What would be the criteria of a sensitive architect towards the “site” – “place”? Should she/he show her/his self-expression regardless of the “site” or possess a neutral stance towards the inputs of the site (when we think about the above mentioned two opposing terms)?

In fact, it was mentioned before that “transformation” and “control” are the terms that are suggested to illustrate human’s relationship with the environment. Rather than being obliged to the possession of the “cleared site” or “constructed site” separately, putting up a criticisizing attitude towards “place” within the investigation of the existing situation of “human action” by “discover(ing) its latent qualities or potential” may be valuable in architecture’s design agenda; as Burns mentions, they “circumscribe the productive potential of the site” (Burns, 1991, 155).

#### 4.2.2.2 Listening to the Site: Some Strategies and Elements

I do not claim that architecture derives from place. There is no cause-effect relationship. To know the site, to analyze and scrutinize it doesn't produce an immediate or obvious answer. And I am against the already common attitude that evaluates place solely as a receiving ground because this attitude weakens the real and close relation between place and the building ... Place is more than a simple frame; it, at the same time, provides hints for the accurate ways for construction process with its genius, place is a reality in expectancy; it always expects the construction action through which its essences, which would otherwise remain hidden comes into view. The action of construction looks after place; in relation to this, it allows our exploration of its essences. Place, at the same time, enables an architectural idea's becoming of unique and autonomous<sup>81</sup> (Moneo, 1992, 4-5).

So far, in the name of “reading” as a methodology to both understand and propose the identification of “place”, the thesis has emphasized the importance of defining the context. It has been mentioned that the essences<sup>82</sup> or particularities of the physical environment in relation to both the physical site and the human condition which are already intermingled through “space” and “time” should be investigated, as architecture belongs to the “place” and to make sense of the world via the activity of building is to give its meaning back.

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<sup>81</sup> Translated into English by the author of the thesis: “Mimarinin yerden türediğini öne sürmüyorum. Bir neden sonuç ilişkisi söz konusu değil. Yeri bilmek, analiz etmek ve onu ayrıntısıyla incelemek dolaysız ve apaçık bir yanıt sağlamaz. Ve ben, yeri mimari fikirler için yalnızca alıcı bir zemin olarak gören neredeyse harcıalem anlayışa karşı çıkıyorum, çünkü bu anlayış yer ve bina arasındaki gerçek ve yakın ilişkiyi zayıflatıyor... yer basit bir çerçevenin ötesinde bir şeydir; aynı zamanda inşaat süreci için doğru yönü gösteren ipuçlarını sağlar. Bu özelliğiyle yer bekleyiş içinde bir gerçekliktir; başka türlü gizli kalacak olan özniteliklerinin görünür hale geleceği inşaat edimini bekler her zaman. İnşaat edimi yeri sahiplenir, ama buna karşılık onun özniteliklerini keşfetmemize olanak verir. Aynı zamanda yer, mimari fikrin özgüleşmesine ve mimari olmasına olanak verir”.

<sup>82</sup> Term borrowed from Rafael Moneo.

It has been mentioned that our engagement in the local envisages two actions: “to accept” or “to change”. Unwin’s question that “What should one try to change; and what should one accept as it is?” (Unwin, 2003, 109) constitutes architecture’s relation with the physical location / condition. “The murmur of the site”, as a phrase coined by Moneo in his article of the same name tells us much in that respect. Pointing out the “essences” of any place in the world where an architect is missioned to build, as Moneo suggests:

It is feasible to think that the first act of an architect when he/she begins to think about a building is to reveal these essences and to listen how these essences publish themselves. It is not easy to describe how this happens. I believe that to learn to listen to the murmur of the site is the most indispensable experience in an architect’s education. To discern what should be conserved or what parts of the existing place should show itself off via infiltrating the new presence of place after the fundamental static man-made is constructed constitutes a crucial point for every architect. To understand which existing qualities of place shall be ignored, eliminated, supposed as non-existing, added or transformed lays at the heart of the architectural practice.<sup>83</sup> (Moneo, 1992, 4)

It is also in relation to this understanding that architecture or the building of a one, unique building is not an automatically driven unique answer to a place (Moneo, 1992, 4). As well, as also Moneo states, the above quoted search for relevance to the particularities of a place should not be necessarily tied to the avoidance of actions eliminating the essences of places (Moneo, 1992, 4). As is stated, “without the site, without a singular, unique site, architecture doesn’t exist” but “There is no cause and effect relationship” as “...to know the site, to analyze and scrutinize it doesn’t produce an immediate or obvious answer” (Moneo, 1992, 4). This idea is also related to a misunderstanding, by Moneo, in regard of “place” and “context”, when they are

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<sup>83</sup> Translated into English by the author of the thesis: “Bir bina üstünde düşünmeye başlarken bir mimarın ilk hamlesi bu öznelikleri açığa çıkarmak, bunların kendilerini nasıl açığa vurduklarını dinlemek olsa gerektir. Bunun nasıl olduğunu betimlemek kolay değil. İnanyorum ki yerin fısıltısını dinlemeyi öğrenmek bir mimarın eğitimindeki en vazgeçilmez deneyimlerden biridir. Neyin korunması gerektiğinin, daha önce var olan yerden nelerin yeni mevcudiyetine nüfuz ederek, köklü devinimsiz insan yapısı inşa edildikten sonra boy gösterebileceğinin ayırtına varmak her bir mimar için can alıcı önem taşır. Yerin var olan özelliklerinden hangilerinin görmezden gelineceğinin, aradan çıkartılacağıının, yok sayılacağıının, ekleneceğinin, dönüştürüleceğinin anlaşılması mimarlık pratiğinin temelinde yatar”.

thought parallel in some ways. He points out the contextual and historical approaches of some others who missioned architecture as an exact complementary of certain contexts as irrelevant in relation to place-based architecture. Furthermore, it should also be noted again that human's relationship to the world is also characterized with the issues of "adaptation" and "change" in the form of "transformation" and "control" (Habraken, 1998, 6).

In relation to the conception of "accepting" or "changing" of particular qualities of "place", there occurs a very basic activity inbetween the architect and the earth. Architecture is about recognizing and choosing, says Unwin (Unwin, 2003, 61). Choosing a place to do something may depict a very simple example illustrating our relation with the environment. The shades of a tree may be the best place for a person to sit or wait in a sunny day, or the north light may be creating the most convenient atmosphere for a painter, this activity of recognition is not much different than an architect's avoidance of the harsh north wind for his building.

In relation to the notion of recognizing or choosing, within the conception of "to accept or to change", we may dwell on the concept "using things that are there" which is called by Unwin for a frame depicting the identification of place may be considered. As is suggested:

Architecture always depends on things that are already there. It involves recognising their potential or the problems they present; it involves, maybe, remembering their associations and significances; it involves choice of site, and sharing with others (Unwin, 2003, 62).<sup>84</sup>

The notion of "depend[ing] on things that are already there" indicates our immersion in "place". In relation to those mentioned aspects, we may say, listening to the "site" is a means of engagement in "place". In the following sections, some strategies and elements that may offer possible connotations in relation to engagement with "place" will be overviewed. The landscape, as with the notions of earth and the ambient &

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<sup>84</sup> Unwin also relates his phrase to Christopher Alexander's "timeless way of building". Unwin, 2003, 65.

modifying conditions of sky, the local built environment and the concern with the phenomenal (thus the embodied meanings and experience) will be our subject matter.

#### **4.2.2.2.1 The Earth / Landscape / Landform**

As was mentioned before, distinguishing natural and man-made environments constitutes roughly the first step in the understanding of “place” in Norberg-Schulz’s consideration where he names the two terms as “landscape” and “settlement”. Within the first step, Norberg-Schulz’s understanding highlighted the study of different environmental levels that could be observed via that distinguishment between man-made and natural environment, where, “landscape” as natural environment was considered as an upper level. Within this framework, landscape depicts primary aspects in man-environment relationships.

On the whole, the relationship between architecture and landscape seems a vague topic. Besides being considered as two different disciplines, the two also connote a fusion in architecture’s task, as they are related to each other. While some of the considerations of “site” as a word connoting also “landscape” have been mentioned before in its relation to architectural discourse, the thesis believes in the necessity of reconsidering landscape’s potentialities for the structuration of a conceptual framework for the analysis, understanding and interpretation of place in the discourse of architectural design.

Besides being an upper level in the study of physical environment, theorizations on landscape as scholarly constituted in the discipline of landscape architecture seem to mostly inaugurate a search for meaningfulness in environmental totality. “Place” and its related terms such as “placemaking” are studied in recent years in many studies within the discipline. It is within this context that *genius loci* gained importance in the constitution of an experiential aesthetics in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. It seems obvious that the discipline has the environment as a major subject in its objectives.

Within this respect, what is the relevance of “landscape” in reference to architecture? Is landscape (architecture), as the nomenclature suggests, a certain part – or branch, in the discourse of architecture? In relation to these questions, Kazi Khaleed Ashraf claims that “architecture is inherently a landscape event” (Ashraf, 2007, 48).

Mentioning about the studies searching for “an intimacy between architecture and landscape”, Ashraf refers to the use of terms of “interdependence”, “complementarity” and “inbetweenness” as keywords within these two disciplines (Ashraf, 2007, 48). Other than these dualistic formations, Ashraf also refers to John Dixon Hunt, for his elaboration of “landscape” and “architecture” in relation to a common discourse, as he suggests:

At the other side of the divide, so to speak, John Dixon Hunt describes landscape architecture as “an activity of exterior place-making,” and in its relationship to pictorial art, it “occurs essentially *between* buildings/architecture and paintings/landskip”. [...] he emphasizes that placemaking is an art of milieu, “it creates a ‘midst’ in which we see or set ourselves ....”<sup>85</sup>

Besides the considerations of “landscape” and “architecture” as being totally different, or partially different within the evaluation of “topography”<sup>86</sup> as constituting a common ground for the two disciplines, Ashraf comes up with a different possibility/paradigm that:

...architecture (as built work) is inscrutably intertwined with landscape, irrespective of whether they appear, or are made to appear, distinctive or not. It is this seamless intertwining, and not an interdependence or in-betweenness between two objective entities, that I describe as a “landscape event”. The intertwining is a continuous and unpredictable play of the various natural and constructed dynamics, and that is how a building yields to the enviroing world, and shared latency “rises to the visible” to make an event (Ashraf, 2007, 48-9).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000) in Ashraf, 2007, 48.

<sup>86</sup> Ashraf refers to David Leatherbarrow cited in John Dixon Hunt, 2000, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

<sup>87</sup> For the last quotation see Jean-Luc Marion, 2002, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 159-73.

Within this consideration, Ashraf uses the term of “being landscaped” for the “yielding of the building to the world/environment”, a situation that is introduced by architecture considered as a “landscape event” (Ashraf, 2007, 49). Within this event, landscape denotes much more than the usually thought; Ashraf considers

...built work as taking place in certain conditions and actualities, some of which are pre-given, some constructed, and some that are a modulation of the first. It is this taking place of architecture – being intertwined with the (environing) world above all – that is being described as the dimension of landscape. Landscape, in that sense, is a summation of topography and the ambient environment (particularly climate and gravity) (Ashraf, 2007, 49).

Ashraf refers to the work of Louis Kahn for the proclamation of his theory of architecture as “a landscape event”, as he believes, the existence of landscape in Kahn’s aesthetics exemplifies very much his theorizations. He specifies some basic notions upon Kahn’s works that should be taken into consideration in the interrogation of architecture as a “landscape event”. As Ashraf states upon the work of Louis Kahn, the landscape phenomenon (“the taking place of a building”) is given presence in two attitudes: (1) “the grounding of the built work” and (2) “the architectural articulation of the ambient condition” (Ashraf, 2007, 51). Within this framework, some keywords come into existence for their relatedness, which are “nature”, “grounding” – foundation, “land architecture” and light as an “ambient narrative of architecture.

For the sake of understanding the man-environment relationships – that would also be the relationship between architecture and landscape – within a conceptual framework, the thesis elaborates the necessity of looking at the above mentioned two aspects of “the grounding of the built work” and “the architectural articulation of the ambient condition”. The two constitute importance in that they show the extent of “allowing a building to be enveloped by the environmental givenness” (Ashraf, 2007, 56). The relation between the building and the environment may be mostly revealed by the aspects of grounding and ambient condition.



## Grounding

“Nature” together with “gravity” gains importance to dwell on in relation to grounding. On the whole, the understanding of “nature” is an important consideration in Kahn’s consideration. Depending on “Kahn’s ‘nature’”, as Ashraf puts:

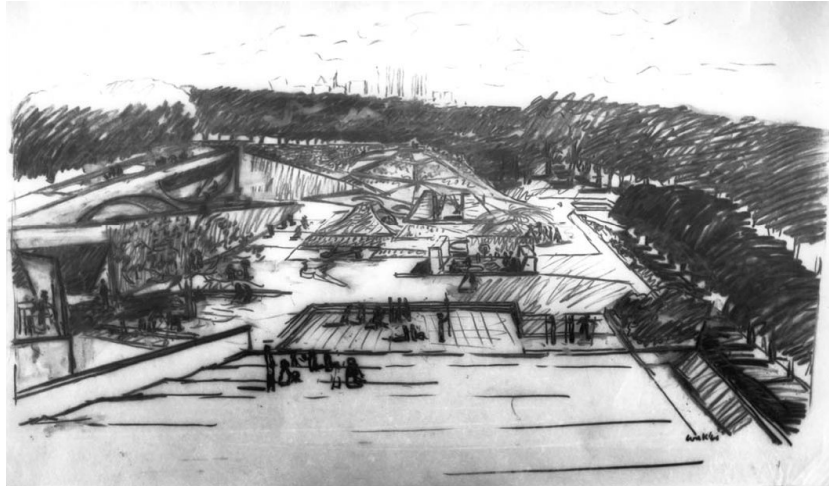
A building must tell, or at least record, the story of its making, from where it springs and how, and that is evidently a landscape narrative. There is the universe or nature, on the one hand, and the human psyche, on the other hand, the former providing the material and means as well as a certain law, and the latter the urge to express the story of a making, which is art, within the given material and law of the former (Ashraf, 2007, 49-50).

Highlighting the problem in terms of man-environment relationships, the consideration of two terms/aspects that builds up the main components of that relationship as “universe or nature” and “the human psyche” is suggested in the quotation. This aspect also makes us remember Norberg-Schulz’s steps of visualization – complementation – symbolization, as was mentioned before. Kahn’s contribution in that respect recalls a similar point. As Ashraf puts, Kahn considers that “architecture completes what nature cannot make”, in that there is (also) “an intentional quality about the human endeavor” (Ashraf, 2007, 50). As Kahn puts:

Nature does not make Art. She works by circumstance and law. Only man makes Art. Because man chooses. He invents. He can make the doors smaller than people and skies black in the daytime if he wants to. He assembles. He can bring together the mountain, the serpent and the child.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Louis Kahn, accessed on 23/08/08 on [http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Erdman\\_Hall\\_Dormitories.html](http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Erdman_Hall_Dormitories.html), taken from Heinz Ronner, with Sharad Jhaveri and Alessandro Vasella, *Louis I. Kahn: Complete Works 1935-74*, 187, 194.



**Figure 13:** Perspective drawing, Levy Memorial Playground (Louis I. Kahn, architect; Isamu Noguchi, sculptor), Riverside Park, New York, 1961–1966 (unbuilt). The project which is considered as “land-art” depicts the notion of “land architecture” – a recently current theme in building up a building’s relation with the earth – that is suggested to be coined by Kahn.<sup>89</sup> Source: Kazi Khaleed Ashraf, 2007, “Taking Place. Landscape in the Architecture of Louis Kahn”, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61, 2 (November 2007), 55.

It is our engagement with those basic elements of architecture, whether in landscape or settlement form, where we mediate in means of “place” during architectural design. Remembering Norberg-Schulz’s steps of visualization – complementation – symbolization together with Kahn’s recording of “nature” as “architecture completes what nature cannot make”,<sup>90</sup> it is in our intention that set the limits of our engagement with the physical world of the basic elements and conditions of architecture.

### The Ambient Condition

Reviewing the work of Kahn in relation to the phenomenon of “ambient condition”, Ashraf prefers to begin with a statement of the architect: “You don’t know how

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<sup>89</sup> Ashraf, 2007, 54-55.

<sup>90</sup> Ashraf, 2007, 50.

beautiful the sun is until it strikes a wall” (Ashraf, 2007, 55).<sup>91</sup> Here, one can sense the reality of the human psyche together with that of universe.

For Ando, the ambient conditions of architecture are behind architectural interventions:

I do not believe architecture should speak too much. It should remain silent and let nature in the guise of sunlight and wind speak. Sunlight changes in quality with the passage of time. It may gently pervade space at one moment, and stab through it like a blade at the next. At times it is almost as if one could reach out and touch the light. Wind and rain are equally transformed by seasonal change. They can be chilling or gentle and pleasant. They activate space, make us aware of the season, and nurture within us a finer sensitivity (Ando, 1996a, 449).

Turning back to the consideration of “building yielding to the world”, the world offers certain conditions for architecture to which building responds to, or “takes place”. “Earth”, “climate”, and “gravity” are “the fundamental facts of the enviroing world”, namely, “realities” (Ashraf, 2007, 50).<sup>92</sup> As is stated, like “Merlau-Ponty’s conceptualization of body as embodied and emplaced in the world”, a building is “literally and perceptually embedded in climate and gravity in a seamless manner” (Ashraf, 2007, 50). To be “entwined with the environment/world”, which is phenomenologically a “manipulatory area” for the “lived body” that is “taken in and incorporated” by it, is what is meant within this respect (Ashraf, 2007, 50).

Certainly, the environment/world becomes a laboratory area within that respect. It is also within this context that Unwin refers to “compositional elements of architecture” that “contribute to the identification of places”, not exactly as “physical materials of building”, or “objects in themselves”; but as “the conditions within which it

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<sup>91</sup> “For Kahn it was natural light that brought architecture to life; the artificial light had an unvarying “dead” quality in contrast to the ever-changing daylight. Light, for him, was not only an instrument of our perception of things, but the very source of matter itself. It represented nature with all her laws by which all matter is bound together (...) Kahn saw architectural elements, such as the column, arch, dome, and vault, in their capacity of molding light and shadow”. Bret Thompson, Paul Holje, Jack Potamianos, 2005, “Louis I. Kahn (1901-74)”, accessed on 23/08/08 on <http://rochesterunitarian.org/Kahn/>

<sup>92</sup> Categorization is made by Ashraf.

[architecture] operates”. Within this consideration, one should define “the ground”, “the space above”, “gravity”, “light” and “time” as the basic elements of architecture, all of which also contribute to the components of “place”.

#### **4.2.2.2.2 Attraction to the Local /or the Built**

As mentioned before, the physical environment consists of mainly two levels, we have distinguished it into two of natural and man-made environments in reference to Norberg-Schulz’s consideration. The man-made built environment, or “settlement”,<sup>93</sup> then, constitutes another important part of our mediation with “place”.

As Ando, cited before for his manifest of “Toward New Horizons in Architecture”, states neatly: “The presence of architecture – regardless of its self-contained character – inevitably creates a new landscape. This implies the necessity of discovering the architecture which the site itself is seeking” (Ando, 1991, 258). Ando has also been quoted before for his crediting of “*genius loci*” as being always influx within the transformation of the earth and history (Ando, 1992, 12-13).

Within these respects, turning back to the historical determinance (of “space” and “time”) conveying that “places are not static, but are in change”, we can give reference to Habraken, who states that concerns of “transformation” and “control” rise within the issue of “adaptation” and “change” in the consideration of the lifeworld of the physical environment while there also exists continuities. As is stated by Habraken:

In growing and changing through time, the built environment resembles an organism more than an artifact. Yet, while ever-changing, it does possess qualities that transcend time. Identities of buildings and cities persist for millenia. Despite transformation, they represent values shared with ancestors and passed down to descendants, uniting past and future. Similar continuity exists in public spaces – streets, boulevards, squares, and neighborhoods – and even in details, in the way a doorway or window is crafted, or how a room is laid out (Habraken, 1998, 6).

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<sup>93</sup> The word is used by Norberg-Schulz (1980).

Within this respect, a study of the built environment, defined as an “autonomous entity”, is considered by Habraken as “the fertile common ground in which form- and place-making are rooted”.<sup>94</sup> To notice once more, the built environment is a combination of physical forms and “the people acting on them”:

If built environment is an organism, it is so by virtue of human intervention: people imbue it with life and spirit of place. As long as they are actively involved and find a given built environment worth renewing, altering and expanding, it endures. When they leave off, the environment dies and crumbles, pulled back down to the earth by the ineluctable force of gravity (Habraken, 1998, 7).

The built environment is an important “subject for expertise” in architecture, to gain the knowledge of the “real world” is depicted by the author as an important task in architecture; as is stated, “...the architectural profession must know the built environment as a basis for designing good buildings”: (Habraken, 2001, 19)

Built form is not our exclusive product but it is the subject of our expertise. The architect may be more sensitive to built form than the layman and he may be very skillful in its manipulation but these qualities are not enough to establish his expertise among the many other professionals who have an impact on the built environment. It is also necessary that he understand form in an explicit, codified way; understand the deployment of materials in space, the organization of space itself as a vehicle for behavior, for power, for territorial organization, for self-expression, and for collective coherence among people. In this way the general must emerge from local experience. (Habraken, 1984, 4-5).

As Habraken further puts, “knowledge of the built environment links theory to practice,” as “practice needs a theory about that world to give direction to its acts – to explain its experience” and “theory needs to contemplate the world for the world to make sense to practice” (Habraken, 2001, 19).

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<sup>94</sup> Habraken, 1998, notes on back cover.

#### 4.2.2.2.3 “Fascination with the Phenomenal”<sup>95</sup>

Certainly to explore why one “place” means for someone is a difficult task as the construction of meanings may depict several individualistic concerns. The formation of places as the process of architecture happens in immense ways. While the issue of the construction of meanings is a difficult phenomenon to understand, there have been attempts to categorize person’s intimacy with “place” in the name of meanings. To remember, Relph’s studies of the concept of “insiderness” in order to rank one’s belonging to a place upon several levels, depends on the “intensity” of the human experience which defines place mostly (Relph, 1976). Meiss says on the other hand that “When a place makes reference to our movements and rituals, it has more chance of becoming memorable” (Meiss, 1990). More recently, Unwin states: “Recognition, memory, choice, sharing with others, the acquisition of significance: all these contribute to the processes of architecture” (Unwin, 2003, 62).

“Meaning” and “experience” come out to denote an important conception. As mentioned before, it is a critical term for the construction / understanding of the phenomenal. “Embodied experience” is what has been mentioned before within this respect. It has been suggested (in reference to Porter) that the constitution of “embodied experience” in the offering of “a platform or a wide range of potential interpretations and associations” (to give people chance to construct “their” meanings) is an important consideration in putting up a relation with the body, as “embodied meaning has such a direct connection to the body and psychological processes” (Porter, 1999, 19). Remembering Porter’s example of Woodland Cemetery, the stairs were embodied “meaning” by physical articulation. As was mentioned, diminishing the height of the rise while keeping the tread constant is an attempt to convey spiritual meanings and this is enhanced by appealing to the body sensation.

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<sup>95</sup> This phrase is also used by Bognar (2005).

It has also been mentioned that the very bodily experience together with one's background knowledge enhances the building up of embodied meanings. For Pallasmaa, the human condition enhanced by bodily experience is an important task in architecture; he positions such an endorsement as a main function in architecture in order to relate and mediate with the existing conditions:

The mental function of architecture is to enrich, articulate, and strengthen our relation with the world and, ultimately, our awareness of ourselves. Instead of detaching us from the physical and sensuous realities of the world, such as gravity, temperature, materiality, texture, and the interplay of shadow and light, architecture needs to invigorate and heighten sensory experiences. It should not project a dreamworld of unreality, but reenchant, reeroticize, and repoeticize the experiential world (Pallasmaa, 2007, 41).

Pallasmaa's understanding goes back to his "The Geometry of Feeling: A Look at the Phenomenology of Architecture", where he mainly deals with the experience of architecture; he studies the concept of the "sensuous" in architecture from a phenomenological position.<sup>96</sup> In relation to "experience" and "meaning", Pallasmaa introduces the notions of "memory", "imagination" and "the unconscious". "The primary feelings of architecture", which are phenomenologically related to human existence as Pallasmaa offers, are not solely related with form, as for him "architecture can not be a mere play with form" and "The experience of art is an interaction between our embodied memories and our world" (Pallasmaa, 1986, 450-51). According to Pallasmaa, imagination is another key term:

The most comprehensive and perhaps most important architectural experience is the sense of being in a unique place. Part of this intense experience of place is always an impression of somethings sacred: this place is for higher beings. A house may seem built for a practical purpose, but in fact it is a metaphysical instrument, a mythical tool with which we try to introduce a reflection of eternity into our momentary existence.

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<sup>96</sup> The author criticizes the advance of "modern science" that is "dominated by the principle of elementarism and reductionism"; for the author, the consideration of solely "visual sense" is a problem. He also states that "the artistic dimension of a work of art does not lie in the actual physical thing; it exists only in the consciousness of the person experiencing it". (Pallasmaa, 1986, 449).

The quality of architecture does not lie in the sense of reality that it expresses, but quite reverse, in its capacity for awakening our imagination (Pallasmaa, 1986, 452).

Pallasmaa also comes up with a critique of postmodernist approaches' use of formal articulations for the sake of constructing meanings. The author suggests that "the efforts being made today to restore the richness of architectural idiom through diversity of form are based on lack of understanding of the essence of art" as he claims that such attitudes are "no longer linked with phenomenological authentic feelings true to architecture" (Pallasmaa, 1986, 449). He means that meaning is not an entity to attach to architecture. As Pallasmaa suggests about the nature of "architectural meaning":

Architectural meaning is based on the human existential condition and the historicity of memory and experience. Consequently, meaning cannot be invented; it can only be rediscovered and rearticulated. ... Instead of accelerating invention and newness, the fundamental task of architecture is to create and defend silence and the slowness of experience (Pallasmaa, 2007, 46).

What constitutes further importance about Pallasmaa's notice on the primary feelings that architecture forwards is that he dwells on the very basic language of architecture where the basic architectural elements convey meaning in relation to our senses of place. He mentions about "entrance", "door", "roof", "window", "being in the room", "the space of light", etc., which say further about the themes of "territory", "boundary", "interior/exterior", "sheltering/shading", "security", "togetherness", "isolation", "approaching the building", the ambient atmosphere, the architectural image, etc. (Pallasmaa, 1986, 451-52).<sup>97</sup>

Amongst the interpretations of the above mentioned phenomenal themes, the interior-exterior relationship is a frequently dwelled term. For Ando, the interior-exterior relationship also depicts the issue of accepting or rejecting:

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<sup>97</sup> We shall remember the similar approach dwelling on the basic elements of architecture as that of Thiis-evensen mentioned before.



To reject what is to be abhorred and to accept only that which is desirable is very much a part of man's most basic behaviour, that of habitation. It is a central concern of habitation to keep out the external world and to protect the world inside, to accept and assimilate only those aspects of the outside world that promote the maintenance of the inner realm. In other words, habitation depends on the skillful manipulation of rejection and acceptance (Ando, 1996a, 449).

For the establishment of interior exterior relation, Ando underscores basic elements of architecture as highly relevant; for Ando, "those places where the internal order meets the external order, that is, the areas of fenestration in a building", shall be given importance. Within this respect, his descriptions about the "wall" may illustrate architect's phenomenal insight:

The more austere the wall is, even to the point of being cold, the more it speaks to us. At times it is a sharp weapon menacing us. At times it is a mirror in which landscape and sunlight are dimly reflected. Light that diffuses around a corner and gathers in the general darkness contrasts strongly with direct light (Ando, 1996a, 449).

The "wall", in this context, mediates between the exterior of given sky, landscape, wind, sunlight, etc. and the interior.

### **4.3 Some Practitioners in Search of Place & Some Exemplary Cases**

In this part of the study, some recent works of architects who value "place" as a design component will be considered. The thesis will look at some attitudes of practitioners whose works may tell us about the naturalization of place-based notions in architectural design.

To remember about the current cultural condition, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that the idea of "place" becomes injured via the conditions of time and space. As Bognar mentions about the conditions of architecture in relation to bigger circles created by various actors in the urban scene:

Due to the rapid progress and advanced state of information technologies, boundaries in today's society are blurred and often completely erased. While hierarchies are questioned and obliterated, the distinction between

the private and the public is disappearing, just as much as the difference between figure and ground within the urban fabric is rendered meaningless or made impossible. The instantaneity of communication and the possibility of “occupying” a multiplicity of spaces simultaneously have now further eroded the established sense of reality and the conventional notion of place. Indeed, the more the electronic network spreads across the world, the more the concept of locality changes its significance. Accordingly, what has traditionally been accepted as reality in relation to fiction – an enduring, predictable, and verifiable state of affairs – has to be reevaluated; today it is often impossible to tell apart the real from the virtual. Or one might say, the sense and definition of the real has been (and still being) shifted, at a much faster pace than ever before (Bognar, 2005, 26).

It may also be said that those rapid progresses in the production of urban life lay down some conditions, or new realities for us to obey relentlessly. We may refer to the condition of “maximization of technology” as a must for the production of the urban which limits the urban activity in some means (Frampton, 2000, 28). According to Frampton, the maximization of technology in production process is evident in many fields including the building industry; as Frampton states in relation to the architectural production:

One may also cite innumerable examples of similar negative consequences in building culture, from the bulldozing of a gently undulating site completely flat in order to achieve an optimum economy in terms of the site work to the designing of museums in which no natural light is admitted in order to exclude even the slightest trace of ultra-violet light; in other words to maximise the conservation of the art object as opposed to the sensuous pleasure of the perceiving subject (Frampton, 2000, 28).

In relation to this consideration of being conditioned by some governing aspects, Frampton claims that “the possibility of creating significant urban form has become extremely limited” (Frampton, 2000, 28). It may be said that it is within the frame of “product-form” versus “place-form” that Frampton criticizes those maximizations; being conditioned to particularities of the current age whether being the maximization of technology, capitalist modes of production, automobile or land speculation limits our relation to “place”.

On the other hand, as architects' reaction to rapid urban progresses are depicted by

Bognar:

Architects have reacted to these rapidly unfolding changes and the ensuing challenges they face in different ways, thus polarizing the field of architectural production. On one end are those who look upon the new developments with an explicitly negative attitude or complete disregard, immersed in a tenacious nostalgia for the past; on the other end are those who have wholeheartedly but uncritically embraced the novelties the new information age offers (Bognar, 2005, 26).

There is also a third frame that Bognar includes, which, he claims, stands between the two groups of architect, and who “acknowledge the inevitability as well as the emerging potentials of the new state of affairs in today’s society” (Bognar, 2005, 26-7).<sup>98</sup> To “engage these new conditions”, a more sensitive approach towards site, landscape and technology, and realities in society is needed.

As Ignasi de Solá Morales states:

The places of present-day architecture can not repeat the permanences produced by the forces of the Vitruvian *firmitas*. The effects of duration, stability, and defiance of time’s passing are now irrelevant. The idea of place as the cultivation and maintenance of the essential and the profound, of a *genius loci*, is no longer credible in an age of agnosticism; it becomes reactionary. Yet the loss of these illusions need not necessarily result in a nihilistic architecture of negation. From a thousand different sites the production of place continues to be possible. Not as a revelation of something existing in permanence, but as the production of an event.<sup>99</sup> (de Solá Morales, 1997, 103, 104)

Japan architect Kengo Kuma is referred as a practitioner who donated to architecture possibilities of engendering a new and intimate relation between the discipline and place (Bognar, 2005, 27). “I try to listen as carefully as possible to the site”<sup>100</sup> says Kuma, in relation to his overall approach to architecture. In this context, “erasing

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<sup>98</sup> The author refers to mostly Japanese architects who encountered the issues of current paradigms of information age through their creation of contemporary Japanese architecture.

<sup>99</sup> de Solá Morales, 1997, also cited in Bognar, 2005, 27.

<sup>100</sup> Kuma cited in Bognar, 2005, 28. Suzuki and Kuma, “A Return to Materials”, *The Japan Architect* 38 (Summer 2000): 4.

architecture” is the mostly visible term that is coined by Kuma; as stated by the architect:

My ultimate aim is to “erase” architecture, because I believe that a building should become one with its surroundings. This is how I have always felt; this is how I continue to feel. How, then, can architecture be made to disappear? (Kuma, 2005, 14).

This passage, defining a building’s relation to its surroundings, on the whole, explains Kuma’s architectural attitude towards environment. As Bognar, who created a monograph on the architect argues, “Kuma’s work, in search for a new paradigm of place and architecture, provides us with not one but a multiplicity of answers” (Bognar, 2005, 27).

The possibilities, as mentioned above, are in some way, strategies that the architect has been gathering in relation to the conditions of architecture that he regarded as valuable. In this context, the strategies are casted in relation to being aware of and responsive to the “landscape” and the “site”; an immersion in “nature and natural phenomena” – echoing ecological considerations – and an interest in the “vernacularly inspired architecture” and technological advances (Bognar, 2005, 25).

The above mentioned “erasing” of architecture can be observed in various approaches that Kuma establishes towards the relation of the building with its setting. Kitakami Canal Museum – a gallery and recreation area located near a river and a canal in Japan – illustrates architect’s attempt to erase architecture by “burying” it; as Bognar mentions about this building,

The structure is embedded in the embankment so that the exterior is almost completely hidden, with the surrounding park and a bicycle path continuing above the museum. The facility was designed to encompass an existing walkway along the embankment, which passes through the underground space.

The walkway, taking a U-shape, virtually turns into architecture; the outside landscape and the architecture of the building thus become connected entities, forming continuity along a single line and resulting in an ambiguity of boundaries between architecture, landscape, and infrastructure (Bognar, 2005, 77).



**Figure 14:** Kengo Kuma & Associates, Kikatami Canal Museum; Miyagi, Japan, 1999.  
Source: <http://www.archilab.org/public/2000/catalog/kengo/kuma07.htm>  
(accessed on 12.08.2008)



**Figure 15:** Kengo Kuma & Associates, Kikatami Canal Museum; Miyagi, Japan, 1999.  
Source: <http://www.archilab.org/public/2000/catalog/kengo/kuma05.htm>  
(accessed on 12.08.2008)



**Figure 16:** Kengo Kuma & Associates, Kikatami Canal Museum; Miyagi, Japan, 1999.  
Source: <http://www.archilab.org/public/2000/catalog/kengo/kuma04.htm>  
(accessed on 12.08.2008)



**Figure 17:** Kengo Kuma & Associates, One Omotesando; Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan, 2003  
Source: <http://www.valdofusi.it/ita/bando/pdf/KengoKuma.pdf>, 6. (accessed on 12.08.2008)



**Figure 18:** Kengo Kuma & Associates, One Omotesando; Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan, 2003  
Source: <http://architourist.pbwiki.com/One+Omotesando> (accessed on 12.08.2008)

Besides bridging that relation with nature, we shall emphasize that this attitude also embraces an attempt to dwell on or encompass that existing walkway into the experiential realm of the building. “Using things that are there” has been mentioned

before as a referential framework for place bound-design. In Kuma's multistory office building structure at Omotesando depicted in the figures above, one can sense architect's appreciation of the things that area already there. The building site is located on a "picturesque boulevard lined on both sides with huge zelkova trees" that lies on a route to a famous shrine in the city (Bognar, 2005, 186). In this project, Kuma appreciates the trees' being there by using a filtering architectural facade of vertical lines of wooden mullions. These basic elements also mediate with the building and trees as part of the place in that particular site. Named as "filtered space", architect's attitude of using repetitive elements to create a filtering effect is also denoted to serve for his aim of erasing architecture, as it helps to "blur" the distinctions between the interior and the exterior (Bognar, 2005, 30-34).

In another context, considering place-making and place-caring as important components to our civic responsibilities, the Australian architect Richard Leplastrier mentions that the built environment needs to be taken into consideration; he addresses the issue of "placelessness" to the dissolution of our responsibilities in relation to "place" (Leplastrier, 1993).<sup>101</sup> Namely, it can be said that this dissolution refers to the disappearance of one's awareness about "place". As Leplastrier suggests:

We show little understanding of both the qualities of place that exist inherently with landforms, and the interconnectedness of landform, building and time. This lack of understanding of landform's primacy in effecting place has given rise to a mindless smother of building that indiscriminately covers ridges, slopes and valleys alike (Leplastrier, 1993).

Leplastrier's conceptualization of "place" may be evaluated in relation to that above mentioned "interconnectedness of landform, building and time". He considers each of the three as a dynamo in the very constitution of "place". "The great cities are made by accretion" says Leplastrier in order to depict "time" as an effective conditioner

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<sup>101</sup> Richard Leplastrier, "Architecture and Place: The Medallist's Manifesto", (1993) Transcript, eds. Andrew Sant and Jerry de Gryse, from Richard Leplastrier's speech at the conference 'Our Common Ground: A Celebration of Art, Place and Environment' held in Hobart in 1993 by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and the University of Tasmania's Centre for Environmental Studies.

(Leplastrier, 1993). As he puts, “time” is important in the sense that it indicates – also within the present and future – “where things come from”, as he correlates true “understanding” with the process of “learn[ing] to see below the surface” (Leplastrier, 1993). We may also recall the historical component of “place” within this respect as places, like organisms, exist. In relation to the physical environment, Leplastrier suggests that the “landform” – as a word that may put meaningful notations in respect to the other words indicating physical location / condition – constitutes “the bones of place” (Leplastrier, 1993). He believes in the necessity of defining the landscape phenomena for each specific area of man intervention. Together with the conditions of architecture, the “significant elements”, as he calls, may be composing a “rhythm” of place. The same may be considered for the built environment as well (Leplastrier, 1993). Thirdly, buildings, as the author suggests, may be important parts of the experience of the city through registering “the psyche of the people” (Leplastrier, 1993). To sum up all, as Leplastrier comments in relation to the “interconnectedness” of building (as the constructed elements”), landform and time:

Imagine our city as some living tapestry where the landform is the warp and the constructed elements the weft. Through time it develops a sense of oldness and charm. Things only become truly beautiful with appreciative use. Naturally, over the course of years, it gets worn out in patches, so some locales need renewal, others only resuscitation. We can't make sensitive decisions without respect for the warp and the weft: one has to understand the strands and all the underlying layers of place in order not to lose its cohesion or pattern. It's similar to the making of a wonderful garden which also needs time for maturity. We don't go ripping out all that we've planted after 20 years and start again. We nurture what is good and make sensitive changes to what is not (Leplastrier, 1993).

As he adds, “Only from an understanding of this ‘interconnectedness’ will there become a genuine breadth and depth to our appreciation of the spirit of place”, that is “Our common ground” (Leplastrier, 1993).

As Spence comments about the Leplastrier's work, it is that “heightened awareness of place with tectonic refinement and an ecologically responsive spirit” that can be read



upon his works.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, Leplastrier's works, mostly houses settled in natural environments, include of segments of nature, climate, light and the surrounding to be incorporated into his sustainable design. Articulation of structural elements in detail and modernized methods interpreted upon traditional ones may be seen as characteristics of his expression.

Leplastrier's buildings, most of which are in the context of nature reveal an awareness about the building's site. This awareness is dealt upon the intensification of relations with nature, such as the views, climate, light, etc. As Spence puts, the architecture of Leplastrier includes "drawing the landscape into architecture" (Spence). About the formal constitution of Leplastrier's buildings, as Spence comments:

While his buildings are frequently grouped in an informal and non-orthogonal manner in response to setting, individual pavilions themselves are often broadly symmetrical in form, around one axis, suggesting a sense of social focus or gathering - a celebration of human rituals. This disparity between site layout and building plan recalls irregular Japanese temple complexes culminating in their formally-planned shrine buildings (Spence)

Within this respect, the architect guides movement in his buildings in relation to both the interior-exterior relation and the axial presences created inside the buildings.

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<sup>102</sup> Rory Spence, "Heightened senses - architectural works by Richard Leplastrier", accessed on 20/07/2008 on:  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m3575/is\\_n1214\\_v203/ai\\_20901452/print?tag=artBody:coll](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3575/is_n1214_v203/ai_20901452/print?tag=artBody:coll)



**Figure 19:** Rainforest House, R. Leplastrier; Mapletown, Queensland, Australia, 1988-91  
Source: <http://www.ozetecture.org/tutors/leplastrier/rainforest.htm> (accessed on 18.08.2008)

To accept or to change: “White House as Void” and “Senan House”

In this part of the thesis, two houses designed by Nevzat Sayın will be our concern in relation to make reverberances about an exploration of the place-bound characterizations that may be read upon them.

“Boşlukta Beyaz Ev” (“White House as Void”), designed by Nevzat Sayın in Saray, Tekirdağ - Turkey in 1997 is landscaped upon a void in a dense forest where things come clear via light. Light, void and forest are the dominant characters of this particular site. These elements seem to affect the designer and thus the “architecture” in a wide range of feelings.

The architect mentions about a tension already apparent between the forest with its darky interiors and the white covered void of nude and shiny appearance – “a harsh tension” to be continued after on. As is also stated, that particular place with its particular dynamics created the story of the house, and it is the house that accepts the tension and silently becomes part of it. It takes place in the landscape by taking part of the void in terms of both its color and its relative position in relation to the forest. It

also adds to the place what is not offered at present, a “strong” structure; as the author states,

We noticed that we were also searching for the peace of leaning upon a strong wall looking to the fore in a wide angle, in disturbance, as we were thinking to locate to the north closing ourselves as to put up with the harsh north wind and to see the void going down the south totally.<sup>103</sup>

It is very much between the author and “place” that the architecture of the house reminds us; it is apparent upon what the author felt about the site where he decided to let the memory remain.



**Figure 20:** A view from the site, “Boşlukta Beyaz Ev”, 1997, Nevzat Sayın; Saray, Tekirdağ, Turkey

Source: Nevzat Sayın, 2004, *Nevzat Sayın: Düşler, Düşünceler, İşler 1990-2004*, ed. Tansel Korkmaz (Istanbul: YKY), 128. (Image cropped by the author of the thesis)

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<sup>103</sup> Sayın, 2004, 129. Translated from the original text into English by the author of the thesis: “Sert kuzey rüzgârıyla başa çıkabilmek için kuzeye yerleşip bütünüyle kapansak, güneye doğru inen boşluğu bütünüyle görsek diye düşünürken, tedirginlikle, dört bir yana bakmak yerine ‘sağlam’ bir duvara yaslanıp geniş bir açıyla önümüze bakmanın huzurunu da aradığımızı fark etmiştik.”



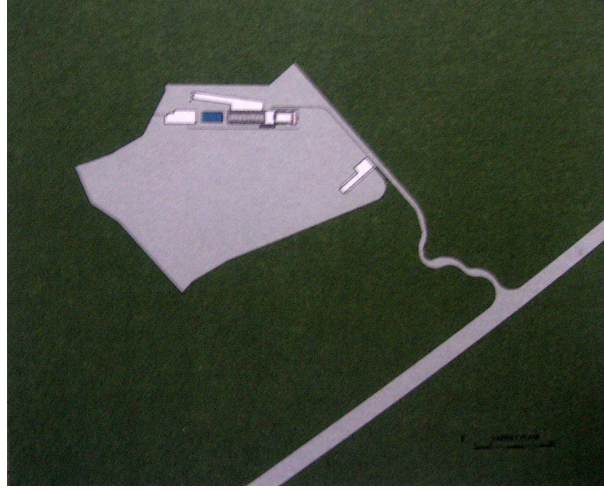
**Figure 21:** Exterior view, “Boşlukta Beyaz Ev”, 1997, Nevzat Sayın; Saray, Tekirdağ, Turkey.

Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5697&image\\_id=36674](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5697&image_id=36674) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 22:** Exterior view, “Boşlukta Beyaz Ev”, 1997, Nevzat Sayın; Saray, Tekirdağ, Turkey.

Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5697&image\\_id=36677](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5697&image_id=36677) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 23:** Site Plan, “Boşlukta Beyaz Ev”, 1997, Nevzat Sayın; Saray, Tekirdağ, Turkey. Source: Source: *Nevzat Sayın, Nevzat Sayın: Düşler, Düşünceler, İşler 1990-2004*, ed. Tansel Korkmaz (Istanbul: YKY, 2004), 128. (Image cropped by the author of the thesis)

Sayın’s “Senan House” in Dikili, İzmir – Turkey (1999-2000), on the other hand, constitutes a different attitude. “A building is for that place where it is and in this way it is unique” says Sayın.<sup>104</sup> In this project, as also the architect mentions, one can sense the extent that one particular environment may define interventions that are waiting to be made upon it. Senan House, as the first intervention of Sayın on the village is engaged in a dense rural context and is acknowledged through the essences of the rural landform, taking into account of topography, climate, the local typology, the existing materials, the existing construction techniques and even the existing labourers in the region.

After all, the tiny village of dense rural context connotes also further dimensions as after the construction of Senan House, further designs have been practiced on the area by the architect. There was only one house to be built in the beginning, as Sayın points. The decision to construct other buildings, which depicts a rather non-planned and arbitrary process, is, in fact, what constitutes the common rule in the tiny village.

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<sup>104</sup> Nevzat Sayın, “Açıklama”, <http://arkiv.arkitera.com/p1262-emre-senan-evi.html>. Translated into English by the author of this thesis.

As Sayın mentions, every new intervention upon the area was made within an adaptation to the before condition and this was what governed the village before in the process of the construction of the local houses (Sayın, “Açıklama”).



**Figure 24:** Aerial view of the Senan House [marked with circle] and the surrounding village of Yahşibey

Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5656&image\\_id=19357](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5656&image_id=19357) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 25:** West façade, Senan House, Nevzat Sayın, Dikili, İzmir

Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5656&image\\_id=19358](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5656&image_id=19358) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 26:** “Street façade of the house”, Senan House, Nevzat Sayın, Dikili, İzmir  
Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5656&image\\_id=19346](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5656&image_id=19346) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 27:** View north; pool and glazing on the west façade, Senan House, Nevzat Sayın, Dikili, İzmir  
Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5656&image\\_id=19352](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5656&image_id=19352) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 28:** View from the living area looking west past the pool, Senan House, Nevzat Sayın, Dikili, İzmir

Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5656&image\\_id=19355](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5656&image_id=19355) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



**Figure 29:** View of Sayın's own house, Dikili, İzmir

Source: [http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location\\_id=5656&image\\_id=19353](http://archnet.org/library/images/one-image-large.jsp?location_id=5656&image_id=19353) (accessed on 18.08.2008)



Above mentioned two houses of Nevzat Sayın show us differing attitudes in relation to “place”. In “White House as Void”, the architect stimulated by “the tension” between the void and the forest has not so much to cling to. He attempts to change the white nude void into a protected area for dwelling where the north wind could be surpassed by the construction of a solid wall. Senan House in Dikili (together with the other houses of the architect), on the other hand, dwells on the existing structure already there in the name of accepting. It, together with the other new ones, accepts the rules of the particular environment while being attemptive to be different from them. “To melt into the place” and “to lie doggo” is what is intended by the architect in relation to the physical context.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Sayın, “Nevzat Sayın ile Söyleşi”, ed. Murat Şahin,  
[http://www.ytumimarlik.com/article\\_info.php?&articles\\_id=1&tPath=1\\_2](http://www.ytumimarlik.com/article_info.php?&articles_id=1&tPath=1_2)

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

On the whole, beginning with the ambiguous nature of the word, which has been mostly regarded as valuable, this study, in every phase, conveyed a search for defining “place”. This thesis is a quest for a current and comprehensible understanding of what “place” may call for architectural design in an age where its conceptualization gains significance due to the contractual geography of “placelessness” that points out our “bulldozed” landscapes (as a term mentioned before in reference to Frampton). In relation to this formation, to grasp “place” in the name of “architecture” and to consider it as a major task in architecture’s fulfillment of the lifeworld have been regarded as crucial within the limits of this thesis. The points of departure from which the study prepared its itinerary mainly lay in discussing architecture as a problematic of “place”. As mentioned before, the thesis began with the announcement of its attempt to explore the relevance of design that regards “place” as a denominator in the task of architecture.

Other than the current age of our being, the study of the immense literature written about “place” so far has been regarded as essential since “place” is a matter of discussion and debate in various arenas and, to repeat once more, what “place” depicted in the last 50 years gains relevance in relation to what it may depict in the name of current conditions in architecture’s agenda.

In these respects, the disciplines of human geography, philosophy and architecture together with phenomenology as a leading school of thought have been a subject of exploration in this study. Within this frame, the thesis attempted to discuss place-based issues in architecture upon the existing research agendas and spheres in terms of conceptual frameworks, contents, interests and practices. Being aware of the huge

literature, the study aimed to investigate and observe with critical attention the concept of “place” and within this context; 1) the nature of “place”, (2) its itinerary around different disciplines, and (3) how architecture possessed “place” constituted importance.

In the second chapter, titled as “Defining Place”, a genealogical framework that helps to depict an understanding of “place” is given. Here, the originary foundations of the concept are studied within phenomenologically driven human geography. Being a central term in human geography, most of the theorizations of “place” are constituted through the utilizations of the basic assumptions of phenomenology where philosophers Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger are mostly cited for their contributions.

In this part of the thesis, the definitions of “place” made by those thinkers in philosophy, human geography, aesthetic theory and cultural geography are mentioned. The consideration of “place” as a “meaningful location” as mentioned in reference to Agnew’s three part definition of “locale”, “location” and “sense of place” constitutes importance within this respect. On the other hand, while the fact that “place” appeals to a wide range of definitions is pointed, May’s third definition of “place” incorporating aspects of particularities upon “space” and “human” has been given consideration as it may be related to architecture.

Subsequently, in this part of the study, the genealogy of “place” in human geography where it originated as a conceptual term is depicted. The rise of human geography and its emphasis on “place” and “placelessness”, in 1970s, as a response to “spatial science” giving emphasis to “space” is mentioned to convey an understanding of the theorizations on “place”. Other than human geography, phenomenology, as a school of thought affecting most of the discussions on “place”, has been given consideration where the thesis attempted to portray a general understanding of the basic assumptions of phenomenology. Here, the importance of considering “people” and “place” together in the name of attaching meaning to certain places is given credit.

The conceptions of “essence”, “intentionality” and “experience” as key dimensions in a phenomenological approach have been our concern in this respect together with the main assumption that people are immersed in “place”.

In the third chapter, namely “Place and Architecture, Some Ways of Thought”, the definitions and assumptions in human geography and phenomenology are carried into the discussions in architecture where the effects of the humanist attitude resonates much for the discourse of “place” in architecture. In this part, the thesis has studied the concept of “place” in architecture which is one of the disciplines that has “place” as subject matter. On the whole, it has been suggested that the transformations on the idea of physical location / condition since 1960s depict the discourse on “place” that posed itself in the form of reactional movements. To note 1960s as times when transgressions between disciplines and schools of thought occurred is important as most of the place-based issues in architecture were dealt at these times when a “more critical apparatus”, as to quote from Mallgrave (2005, 369), was intended to be proposed within architecture.

In relation to that critical apparatus, the transformations in the means of spatial production is attempted to be portrayed. Lefebvre’s moments together with Gregotti’s differing internationalisms pointing out changes in the conceptions of “time” and “space” are given reference within this respect. Being the consequences of the changes, transformations and the call for that “more critical apparatus”, the critical agenda of architecture is firstly studied in relation to some words depicting physical location and condition. “Site” and “context” are studied within this consideration.

On the other hand, the search for the ancient Roman term “*genius loci*” that is mostly utilized for the discussions of “place” in architecture is studied. Within this respect, Norberg-Schulz who is regarded as a milestone for the incorporation of phenomenological insight into architecture is given reference for his conceptualizations of “*genius loci*” in relation to architecture.

Other than the search for “*genius loci*” and / or the enhancement of “dwelling”, the discrediting of the phenomenologically proposed place-based approaches is also given consideration together with the transformation from “place” to “non-place” where the conception of supermodernity is exemplified. Supermodernity which seems to propose another type of transformation in the name of “space” and “time” signs up for the more recent paradigms and conceptualizations of “place” that are studied in the fourth chapter. To note, within this chapter, we may say that the genealogy of place-based approaches as discussed in respect to the physical location and condition constitute a plurality together with the attitudes that regard “place” as useless. On the other hand, we may also sense about a common paradigm as the effects of the humanist attitude resonate much for the discourse of “place” in architecture.

The fourth chapter, “A Search for A Current Conceptualization of Place in Architecture”, then, is an attempt for an update of discussions of “place” where the current time is intended to be illustrated together with re-evaluations and re-considerations of the near time. Upon the writings of architects and theoreticians such as Ando, Mugerauer, Pallasmaa and Perez-Gómez, we may sense that “place” is still a “matter” to dwell on in the name of the relation between architecture and life; the debate continues. Within the selected writings, the construction of places is seen as a task in architecture. The current literature on “place” which is mostly inaugurated through manifests seem to converge on some commonalities as they all criticize its devaluation which is mostly related to standardization, generalization, consumption and thematization. They call for an architecture that is, in the very beginning, loaded with the idea of creating places for human. “Place” is considered by the authors as a way of escape from “style”. On the whole, the idea of “a new mode of architecture”<sup>106</sup> is announced.

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<sup>106</sup> Phrase was quoted from Mugerauer in the preceding chapters (Mugerauer, 1994, 166).

Within these considerations, the thesis has aimed to propose a framework for place-bound design in architecture and firstly gave reference to the conceptualization of architecture as “identification of place”, as coined by Unwin. The conception of architecture as “identification of place” is utilized in this study for the fact that it defines “place” in relation to architecture and *vice versa*.

Other than defining “place” and “architecture”, reading “place”, in the name of “listening to the site” is suggested as a frame for both understanding and performing in the name of place creation. Having mentioned about the argument that the physical environment needs further study to propose a framework for “understanding” and “performing” in the name of “place”, in this part of the study, the physical location and condition regarding the conditions of architecture and human is studied. Defining and listening to the “site” is the suggested two activities in the name of reading, and to make sense of the physical environment which is offered as the very first ground for the architect to design for a certain place is aimed within these activities.

Within this respect, firstly, the architectural understanding of the “site” has been our concern. It has been suggested that our engagement with the physical world is clarified with our “intentions” where “to accept or to change” (as a frame offered by Unwin, 2003) determines the type of our action and mediation with the physical environs. Here, the conceptions of the “cleared site” and “constructed site” (offered by Burns, 1991) are given reference. Secondly, listening to the site is offered as another means of our mediation with the site. Listening to the murmur of the site is also correlated with the activities of “recognizing”, “sharing” and “using things that are there” (Unwin, 2003). It is in this part of the study that the landscape (and the notions of earth and the ambient & modifying conditions of sky), the local built environment and the concern with the phenomenal pointing out the embodied meanings and experience have been offered as strategies and elements to make sense of the physical environs.

Apart from seeing the physical environment as the very first ground for an architect to understand and perform in the name of mediating with “place”, we shall also note that the production of a place is not a solely physical entity. While not included within the limits of the thesis, it has been mentioned before that places are in change and that other than the material world and the human condition, architecture operates in relation to some other mechanisms. We may also mention about the relevance of another key word “event” as places may come into existence through them. “Events” may bring with themselves the “meaning” that people attach to certain places.

However, we can mention about strategies and elements of the physical environment and conditions that may provide ample room for the study of architecture in relation to “place”. It is within this respect that, in a dialectical sphere inbetween the existing research agendas and spheres in terms of conceptual frameworks, contents, interests and practices, the thesis attempted to put up a framework for place-bound design where that physical environment loaded with time and the human condition has been evaluated by means of three elements and/or strategies offered as concerning the natural, the local / built and the phenomenal.

It is also in the fourth chapter that the selected works of three architects who aim to put up a new dialogue between place and architecture are studied. In a sub-heading, two houses of Turkish architect Nevzat Sayın has been examined in relation to the dialogue that the architect builds up with the physical site given. To re-evaluate the two houses; besides the attempts of the architect in either house, a correlation seems to break surface in relation to the before mentioned conception of “the binding of environment”. To remember, in his “Senan House” and “House as White Void”, Sayın searches for the trails of “place” between the actions of “accepting” or “changing”. It is the very nature of the particular places that affect his design in the beginning.

The idea of “place” settles down in the grounding of architecture as a conception that affects the foundation of the relation we construct with the site *ab initio*. Considering

the exemplary cases and arguments in mind, the relation (or mediation) that we build up with “place” seems to be relying on the binding of the environment. This is also what differentiates nature and metropolis in the context of decisiveness. Remembering Ando’s notice on “the real world” from which the abstract in architecture departs and where the point of departure may include “place”, “nature”, “lifestyle” or “history”; the physical environment defines our engagement in place. Here, it is also important to note that the architects who are in pursuit of “place” usually compose their discourse over areas presenting values in relation to nature, history or identity.

On the whole, throughout the thesis, “place” has been considered as a mediation between man and earth. It has been evaluated as a way of understanding those relationships between the two, and architecture has been given due consideration in the way that theories and practices of it that are engaged in the physical environment play significant roles in the provision of “belonging” which is a subject matter of placemaking – attaching certain values and meanings to the groundstone of our lives – and our lifeworld. Within all these considerations, that activity of mediating with the environs by defining, listening and interpreting the given also necessitates the incorporation of another term; “dialogue”. While the importance of listening to “the murmur of the site” has been explored so far, it is also important to note that placemaking as the very human endeavor necessitates engagement in the “social” and maybe “psychological” context.

Turning back to the main aims of this study which are triggered by the placeless geography of our time, the thesis carried the intention to gather an insight about “place” in relation to architectural design which is itself considered as a problematic of “place”. Within this respect, calling for an “awareness” in relation to the physical environment enhanced within time and the human condition has been regarded as essential.



In relation to that “awareness”, we may refer to the Heideggerian idea of “dwelling” as a moral task that encloses most of the literature on the relation between “place” and architecture. It is in regard of this phenomenological frame that the writings of Norberg-Schulz, Gregotti and Ando<sup>107</sup> in relation to “*genius loci*” have strived for an immense engagement in “site”. While the proposal that “place” may be seen as a determinant of the ethical function of architecture needs further study, the discussions of architectural design as a problematic of “place” regarding physical environment as a point of departure and awareness may tell us more in the name of uniqueness and timelessness.

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<sup>107</sup> Nesbitt (1996) relates Ando’s phenomenological conceptualizations to Norberg-Schulz’s, Frampton’s and Gregotti’s writings on Heidegger and architecture.

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