

Chapter 3

THEORY

This chapter investigates theories regarding “place” and place making as an approach to deal with non-places and lost spaces. The theories that are discussed are used as informants to analyse the context in Chapter 4, and inform design decisions in Chapter 6.

- 3.1 Regenerative Design
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3.1_REGENERATIVE DESIGN

3.1.1_INTRODUCTION

Regenerative design provides a coherent approach for establishing a “co-evolutionary partnership with nature” by pursuing sustainability within the conceptual framework of living- and evolving systems, understood as social and natural conditions. It aims to develop the capabilities of these systems in order to express their potential for diversity, complexity and creativity (Mang and Haggard, 2016:xxvii)

Projects that regenerate address the unrealised potential that is inherent in the relationship between a given system and the larger system in which it is nested (*Figure 3-01*). This approach aims to enable living systems, consisting of both humans and natural systems, to co-evolve by expressing their latent potential in the form of new value in the world, by taking what currently exists and moving towards a condition that could manifest in the future. In other words, regenerative design creates a “field condition” that allows living systems to improve and provides for a coalescing direction for other levels of work to emerge (Mang et al, 2016:xxx). The practice of regenerative design requires a worldview that correlates with living systems.

In her book, *Regenerative development*, Pamela Mang provides a way of thinking that is fundamental to regenerative development. She outlines general principles and concepts to provide a framework for rethinking the potential that design and development can accomplish. These principles will be discussed below:

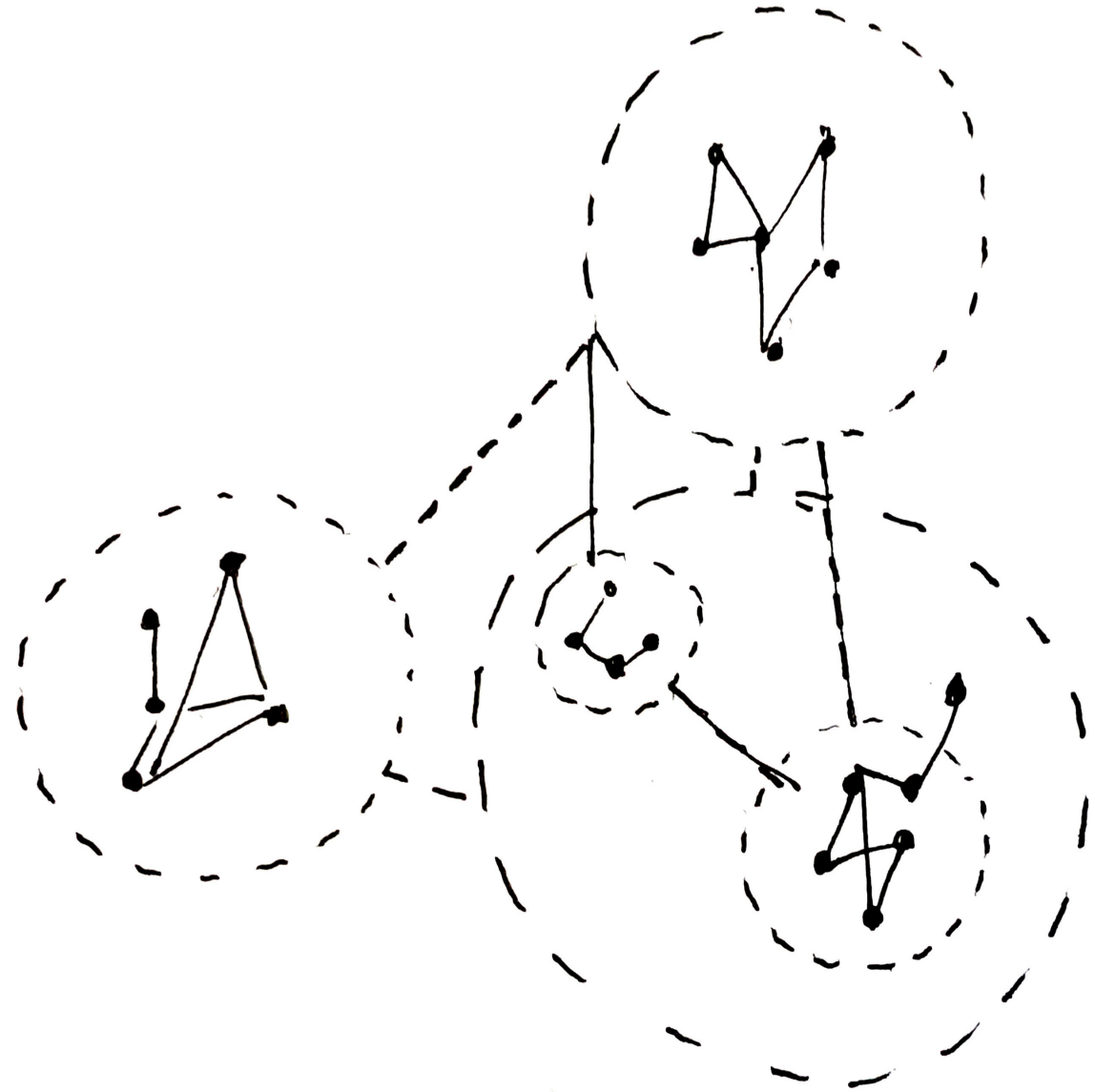


Figure 3-01: Diagram illustrating the concept of living systems as part of a larger network in which it is nested (Author, 2019).

3.1.2 DESIGN FOR EVOLUTION

1. Change as the only constant
Living systems are known to be impermanent and susceptible to change. Designing for evolution requires us to approach change as a source of creativity, instead of a mind-set that change is something to prevent. Furthermore, evolution does not only respond to change, it creates it.

2. Diversity: Exchanging value
In his book, *Complexity: The emerging science at the edge of order and chaos*, Mitchell Waldrop refers to the work of John Holland, a pioneer in complexity science, who argues that organisms in an ecosystem evolve as a result of their interactions with one another. The ability for an organism to survive depends on the type of organism it is surrounded with. The diversity of elements, whether being organism in an ecosystem or buildings on a site, adds no value if there is no beneficial exchange of resources, energy or material among them (Mang et al, 2016:16). The diversity that is of importance is the network of relationships that emerges from and around interacting elements. The dynamic interactions created by these relationships are critical to evolution (Mang et al, 2016:16).

Unlike traditional projects, regenerative projects seek to build the evolutionary capability of a system in which it is designed. This can be tangible or intangible systems, ie communities and urban form. Regenerative projects can help to establish the foundation for continuing evolution of natural and social systems (Mang et al, 2016:20). It is important to understand that designing for evolution does not mean designing evolution. It is within itself an emergent process that develops through multiple interactions among living beings and their environments. Therefore, the specific outcomes can't be predicted or designed. Instead, we can ask what it is that prohibits evolution in order to create the condition for evolution to occur that will influence change (Mang et al, 2016:29).

“...we can ask what it is that prohibits evolution in order to create the condition for evolution to occur that will influence change”

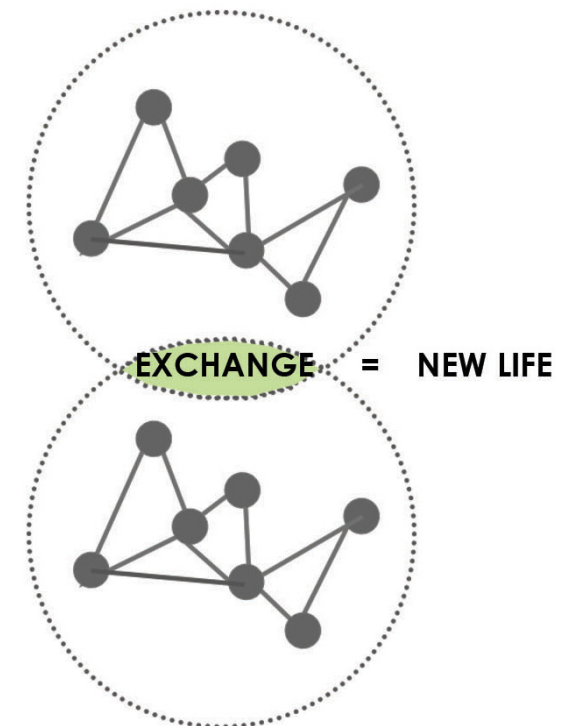


Figure 3-02: Diagram illustrating the concept evolution as a result of interacting elements and the exchanges between them (Author, 2019).

3.1.3_UNDERSTANDING PLACE

Place

The theories developed within a regenerative worldview are developed and built upon the understanding of place, what makes it unique, what gives it vitality, what is the source of its potential and therefore its capacity to evolve (Mang et al, 2016). Place is the core position and foundation in developing regenerative projects. It goes beyond the traditional theories of place based on topography, climate, light and tectonic form (Hes et al, 2015:117). Although these elements and theories are relevant and included, it is a more subjective construct that is formed from an understanding of the entire network of ecological and cultural systems and their interactions within a geographic area (Hes et al, 2015:117).

Partnering with place, place as a living system.

Partnering with place implies a **relationship between living entities**. Places are within themselves living systems, made up of smaller systems, nested within larger systems. (Mang, 2016:39). Places are dynamic and understanding them presents unique challenges. Understanding these patterns can assist in developing an **understanding of existing relationships** that are present in place. Furthermore, patterns provide clues as to how a system of parts self-organise and sustain themselves, and even what their evolutionary potential may be (Hes et al, 2015:118). By using pattern literacy to read a landscape, it allows the designer to understand the flows and relationships shaping a site, whilst determining its potential and how to harmonize and contribute to a site through design (Hes et al, 2015:118).

The Story of place

Developing on the idea of place as a living system is through the development of Story of place. This allows one to:

- a) understand how to best align human interventions with the processes and relationships already on site,
- b) evoke a sense of caring and ownership of place; and
- c) provide an ongoing learning process that will support the co-evolution of people and their place (Hes et al, 2015:119).

By integrating ‘who’ the place is into a coherent narrative helps seemingly unrelated aspects to be seen as part of the whole as well as support the ownership of the initiative as the stakeholders see how the project fits into the larger story.

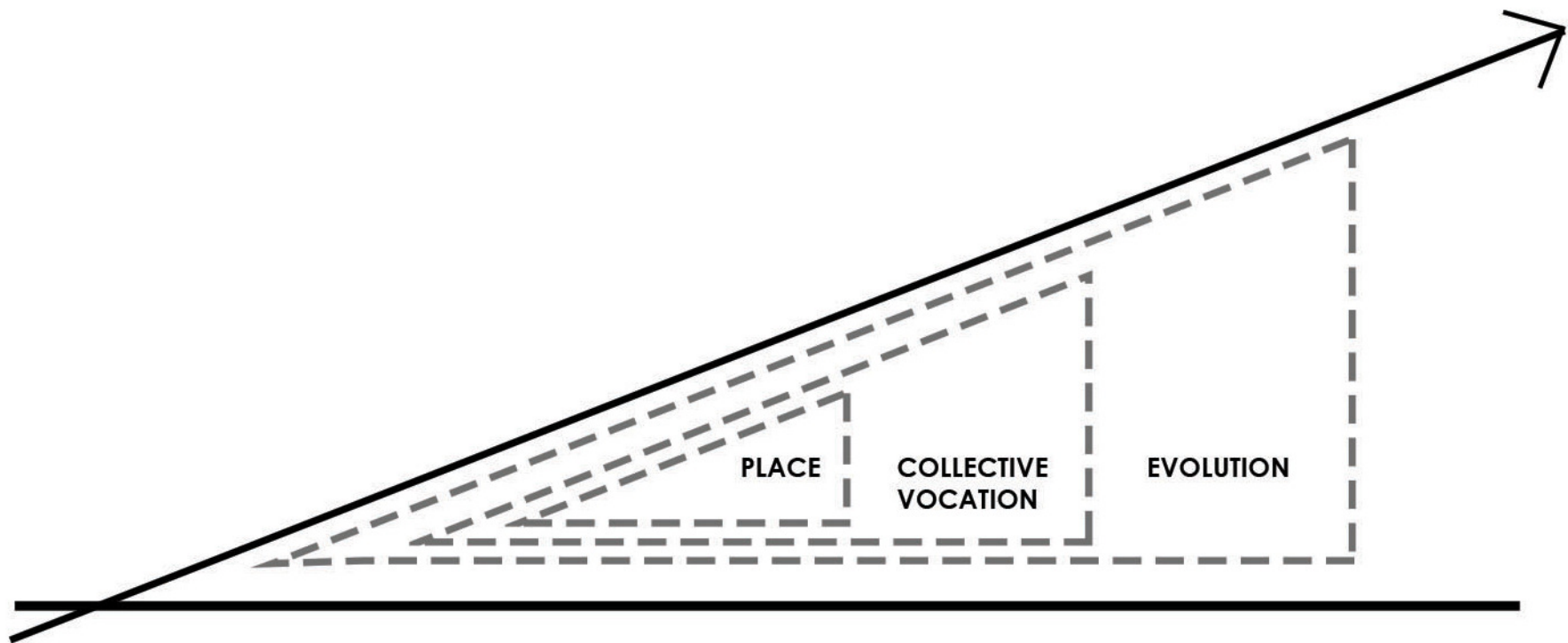


Figure 3-03: Diagram illustrating the concept of regeneration as a nested system consisting of place, vocation and evolution (Author, 2019).

3.2_PLACE MAKING

3.2.1_WHAT CONSTITUTES “PLACE”

The notion of space and place are fundamental concepts in architecture. Theorists such as Heidegger and Norberg-Shulz have done extensive research on the topic to advocate that the purpose of architecture is to create space for dwelling and living (Parsaee, 2015). A place is a space that is perceived as having a distinct character, meaning and value (Grutter, 1987).

Architectural space is defined by walls, floors and roofs as well as the relationship between the inside and outside environment (Grutter, 1987), where as place combines, memory, sensory experience and narrative (Fakouhi, 2006). Space facilitates movement wher as places creates pause and dwelling to allow for human interactions. These are just some distinctions between space and place.

Place theory in spatial design lies in an understanding of the cultural and human characteristics of a physical space. If we view space in its abstract, physical terms, space is a bounded or purposeful void with the potential of physically linking things, it only becomes place when it is given a contextual

meaning that is derived from cultural or regional content. Each place is unique and therefore takes on the character or Stimuli of its surroundings, being the physical things that makes up the material practice of architecture along with intangible cultural associations (Trancik, 1986:112).

In his book, “Place and Placelessness”, Edward Relph (2016) postulates that for space to be a place it needs to have certain identifiable characteristics

1. *Localisation and the identity of place*

- (a) physical setting
- (b) its activities and events
- (c) People’s shared experiences

2. *Spatial extention* (due to being a location) meaning that a person can be part of a place without being physically in the space.

3. *Unique network of of circulation* that contains an interrelated system of spatial interactions and transfers.



Figure 3-04: Diagram illustrating the power of 10 (<https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>).

Placemaking is the act whereby spaces becomes places. Architecture creates spaces that are visualised to become places. Projects for public places (Pps.org, 2019) developed a framework for thinking about place: ‘The Power of 10’ says that a city should have ten or more nodal destinations and each destination should have ten places, where each has ten activities, layered to create synergy. In short, a great place offers a variety of activities that overlap to generate synergy and diversity.

Great public spaces are those places that allow for social and economic exchanges to occur. In order for public places to be successful, they should share the following qualities (Figure 3-05):

1. **Access and linkage (both physical and visual)**
The space is easy to get to and visible from a distance and up close. The edges are important to create activity.
2. **Comfort and Image**
Does the space present itself well? Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness and the availability of places to sit.
3. **Uses and activities**
Multiple activities allows for choice and diversity
4. **Sociability**

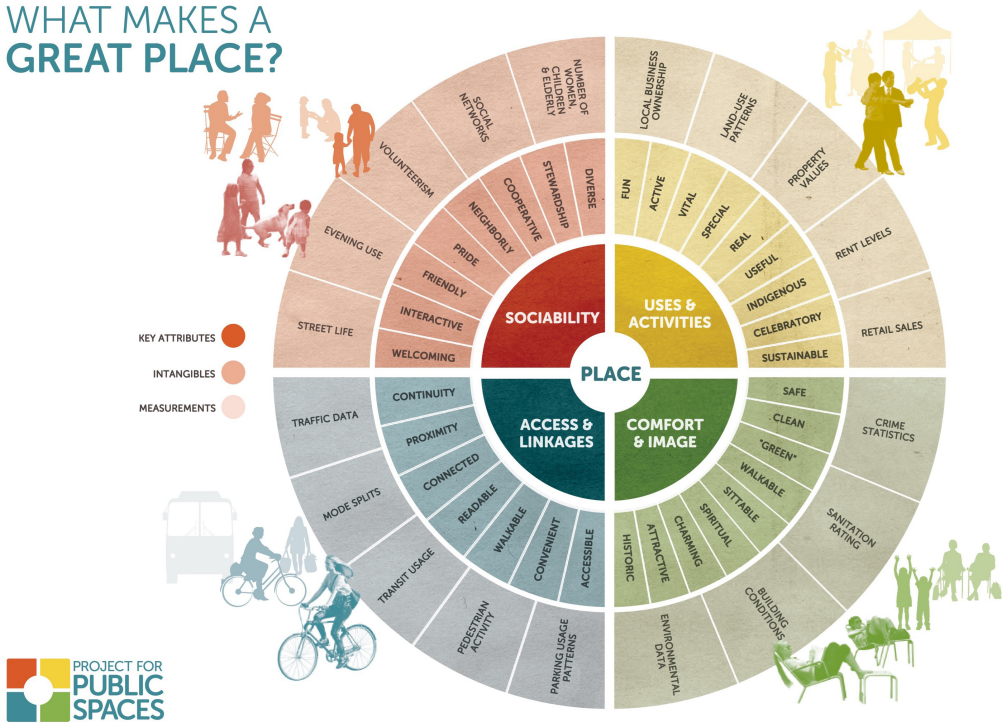
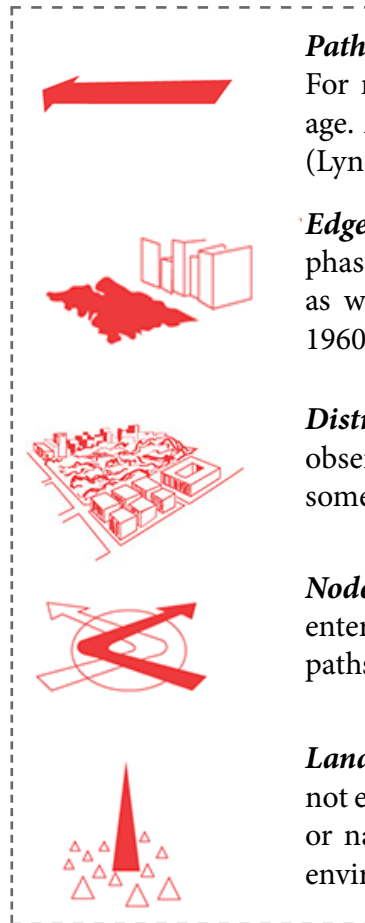


Figure 3-05: Qualities of successful public places (<https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat>).

3.2.2_LEGIBILITY AND THE IMAGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A place is a space that has a distinct character. The Genius loci, or spirit of place has been recognised since ancient times as the concrete realities man has to face and come to terms with in his daily life. The role of Architecture is to visualize the essence of place and create meaningful places for people to dwell (Trancik, 1986:114) .

During the 1960's the functionalist models of the city were approached by an European movement consisting of contextualist that viewed and analysed the disparate parts of the city caused by the functionalist models of the modern era. Kevin Lynch, also looked at the city in parts in an attempt to define a theory of place (Trancik, 1986: 118). In his book, image of the city, was influential in design theory in the sixties where he proposes a set of principles for designing city spaces and to formulate an image of the city. The principles are (1) Legibility: the mental picture of the city held by the users on the street, (2) Structure and identity: the recognizable, coherent pattern of urban blocks, buildings and spaces; (3) imageability: dealing with the user perception in motion and how people experience space in the city. According to Lynch, successful urban spaces were those that met these requirements, and the parts of the city, which he referred to as elements, should be designed around these requirements. He then presents five elements (Figure 3-06) that makes up the image of the city (Lynch, 1960).



Paths are the channels along which the observer or user move. For many people, this is the predominant element in their image. Along the path, the other elements are arranged and related (Lynch, 1960:46).

Edges are the linear elements that form boundaries between two phases. They become lateral references within the environment as well as organizing features that bind areas together (Lynch, 1960:46). Edges gives form and definition to paths.

Districts are the medium to large sections of the city where the observer mentally enters “inside of”. It is recognizable by having some common or identifying character (Lynch, 1960:46).

Nodes are intensive foci points in a city into which an observer can enter. They may be primary junctions, crossing or a convergence of paths (Lynch, 1960:46).

Landmarks are another type of point reference, although users do not enter within them. They are external elements, such a building or natural element that are used as radial references within the environment (Lynch, 1960:47).

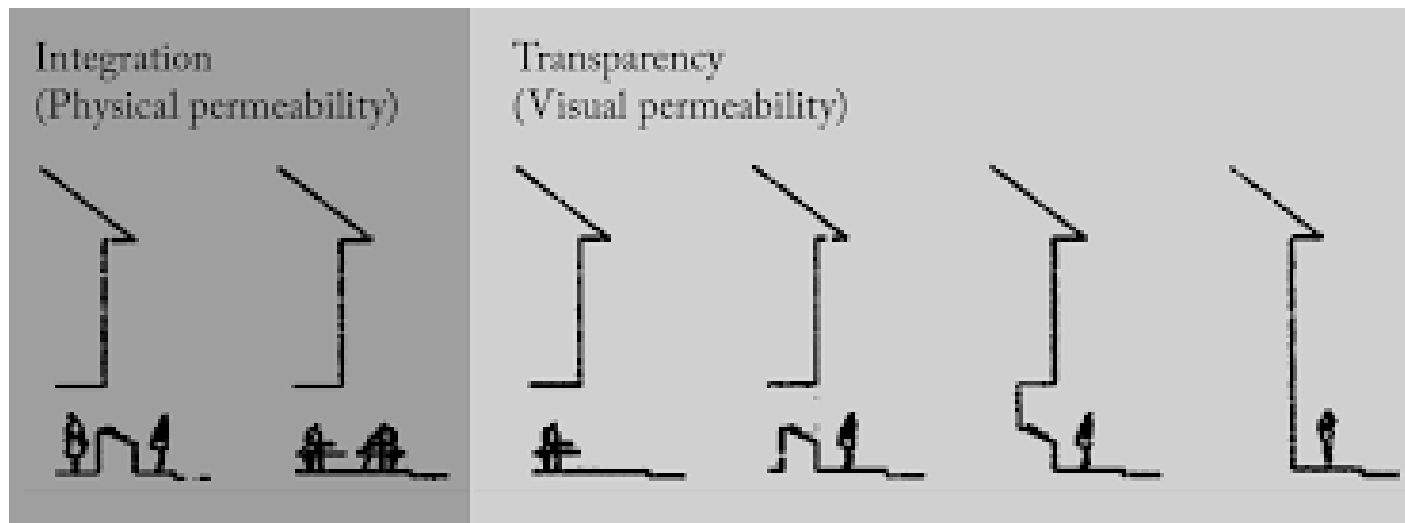
Although these theories are mainly based on urban principles, Architecture can find a fit between these elements to construct or reconnect space in order to develop the image of a site to form a relationship within its context.

Figure 3-06: Elements to construct the image of the environment (Lynch, 1960)

3.2.2_EDGES AND THE IN-BETWEEN

In his book, *Cities for people*, Jan Gehl (2013:29) questions how to create human scaled interventions when the urban condition is already far beyond any human scale. He states that ground floor facades provide an important link between these scales and between buildings and people. In order for public space and buildings to be treated as a whole, the ground floor facades, forming the edge conditions to the public realm, must have a welcoming and permeable design to allow for either physical or visual interaction (Refer to figure). This “good”, “close encounter architecture” as he puts it is vital for good cities.

Figure 3-07: Grading of edge conditions (Gehl, Johansen Kaefer and Reigstad 2006:40)



3.3_CONCLUSION

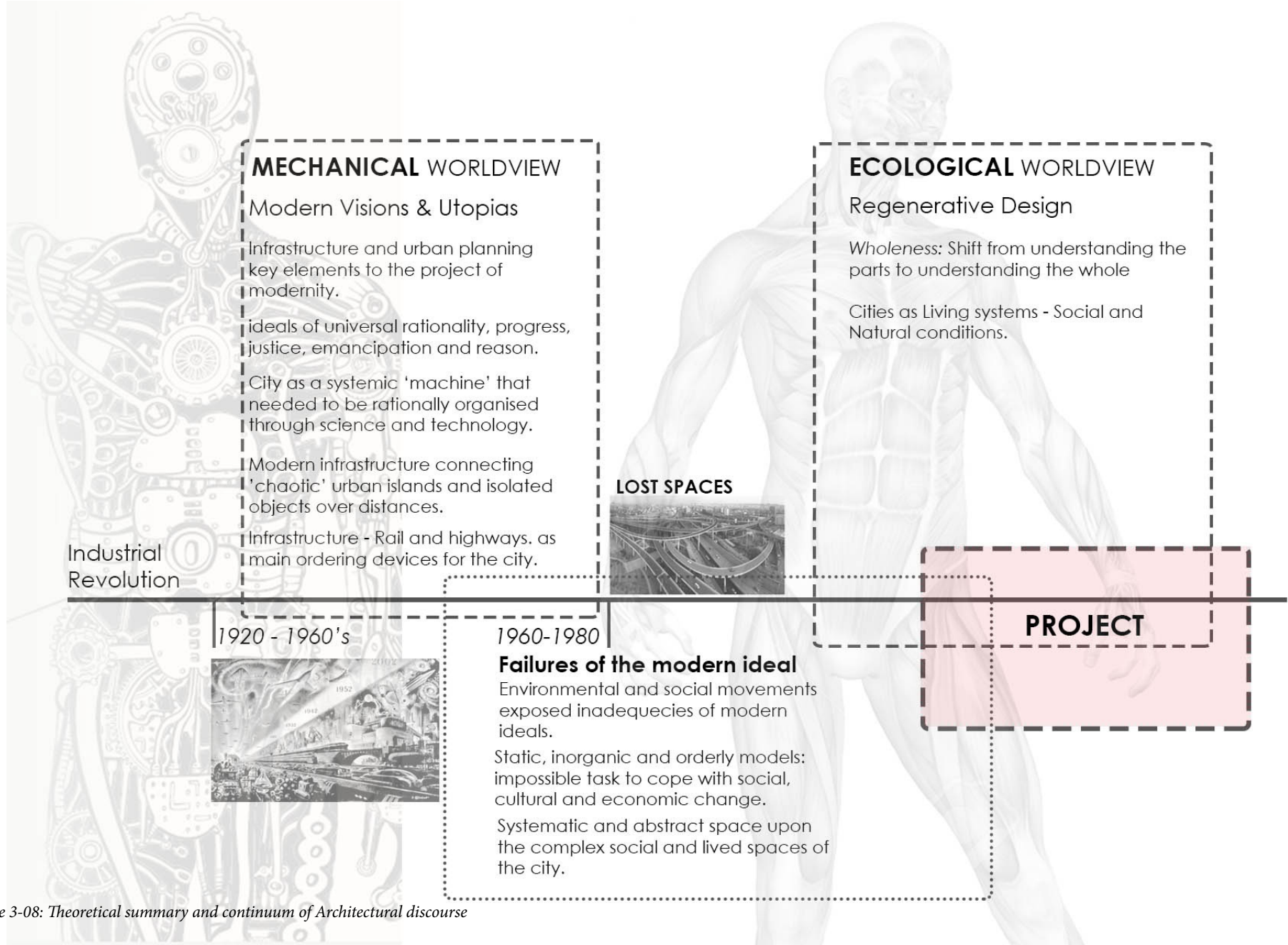


Figure 3-08: Theoretical summary and continuum of Architectural discourse

