

[3]



[chapter 3] methodology

It is the role of the architect to “take responsibility for a building’s behaviour as well as its artistic presence” (Sorkin 2004:63), “architecture is unavoidably a public art that is seldom simply serving the pleasure of its creation it must inevitably provide an appropriate shared experience” (Porter et al 2004:140). We need to consider the behaviour of a building and its influence on the surrounding community and environment throughout all stages of development and its lifetime. Sorkin (2004:64) writes that we should never produce projects that, if built would have a clearly detrimental effect on a neighbourhood. He believes that there is no instance where a building could be “sufficiently exceptional as to excuse trodding on the existing convention of scale.” Le Roux (2003:17) describes the role of architecture as “one of support, not of control”. We should therefore work toward creating community architecture that can make a contribution toward social development (Jekot 2003:23). Moreover, we should, through our projects, aim to demonstrate the value of an architect in raising the sense of communal pride, and of architecture, in engendering a sense of community. We design buildings to improve the lives of people. Whether a building provides a home or purely stands to inspire awe; architecture affects people. Of particular interest to me is what the effect can be and how good architecture can create an environment that evokes positive experiences and perceptions. Let us look to phenomenology to discover how architecture can support meaningful experiences in the built environment.

1. phenomenology

As architects we do not primarily design buildings as physical objects, but the images and feelings of the people who live in them. The phenomenology of architecture looks at architecture from within the consciousness experiencing it, and seeks the inner language of building (Pallasmaa 1996:450)....The most comprehensive and perhaps the most important architectural experience is the sense of being in a unique place.

The quality of good architecture for Pallasmaa is not in the sense of reality that it expresses, but in its ability to stimulate our imaginations (Pallasmaa 1996:452).

The Importance of Place Making

Why do so very few modern building appeal to our feelings, when almost any anonymous house in an old town or the most unpretentious farm outbuildings gives us a sense of familiarity and pleasure? (Pallasmaa 1996:448)

Phenomenology for Norberg-Shultz, describes a methodology for place-making, and proposes that the existential purpose of architecture is to transform a site into a place and to uncover the meaning of that place (1996:422). Christopher Alexander described phenomenology as that “quality without a name” (Porter et al 2004:140).

Pallasmaa believes that “the buildings of our own time may arouse our curiosity with their daring or inventiveness, but they hardly give us any sense of the meaning of our world or our own existence” (1996:448). “On the basis of the ideology taught by the Bauhaus school, architecture is taught and analyzed as a play with form combining various visual elements of form and space. This is thought to acquire a character which stimulates our visual senses from the dynamics of visual perception as studied by perceptual psychology” (Pallasmaa 1996:449, Pallasmaa promotes the idea that an artistic work is the opposite of the elementarist idea and that the meanings of an artistic work are born out from the whole and are in no way the sum of the elements according to gestalt perceptions (Pallasmaa 1996:449). In terms of the meaning of art and architecture for us, Pallasmaa believes that “meaning lies not in its forms, but in the images transmitted by the forms and the emotional force that they carry. Form only affects our feelings through what it represents.” Therefore a stylistic return to ancient themes lacks emotive power and is no longer linked with phenomenologically authentic feelings that are true to architecture” (Pallasmaa 1996:449).

Why do abandoned, unheated houses have the same smell of death everywhere? Is it because the smell we sense is in fact one that is created through our eyes? (Pallasmaa 1996:453)

The phenomenological idea of place, as suggested by Frampton, is a solution to main urban and environmental problems (Frampton 1996:440). What then makes a *place*? It is obviously something more abstract than simply a geographical location. Frampton says “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.”

Being a qualitative composition of various totalities places cannot be broken down and analysed in any scientific terms. Norberg-Shultz describes the structure of places, firstly by distinguishing between natural and man-made phenomena, and secondly by representing the categories of earth-sky (horizontal-vertical) and outside-inside (horizontal-horizontal). “These categories have spatial implications and *space* is hence re-introduced, not primarily as a mathematical concept, but as an existential dimension.” The final, and particularly important, step is taken with concept of ‘character,’ where character describes the general atmosphere of a place: “the concept of *genius loci* denotes the essence of place” (Norberg-Shultz 1996:418).

The structure of a place is not a fixed, eternal state. As a rule places change, sometimes rapidly. This does not mean, however, that the genius loci necessarily change or gets lost (Norberg-Shultz 1996:418).

Norberg-Shultz makes three important points about the essence of place making:

- firstly, he points out that mono-functional places will soon become useless. Places should have the capacity for naturally facilitating different functions;
- secondly, a place could obviously be interpreted in different ways. In order to protect the *genius loci* its essence needs to be concretized in ever new historical contexts; and
- thirdly, the history of a place ought to be its self-realization; the possibilities of a place should be illuminated and preserved through works of architecture that are simultaneously old and new (Norberg-Shultz 1996:422).

Space and Character

“Place is illuminated by the analysis of the aspects of space and character” (Norberg-Shultz 1996:422). By looking at the structure of basic linguistics one can gain a better understanding of what is meant by *space* and *character* and their relationship to *place*. *Places* are referred to as nouns, this implies they are concrete “things that exist” e.g. town square, garden, bedroom, city; while *spaces* are denoted by prepositions and referred to by relation e.g. things that are: over, under, upon, behind; and *character* is descriptive and referred to with one or many adjectives, e.g. festive, sombre, cosy.

Space and *character* come together at the boundary that defines places. From this understanding one may agree with Venturi when he defines architecture as “the wall between the inside and the outside” (Norberg-Shultz 1996:418). While *space* is defined by its relationship to objects, *character* is created by the formal and material qualities of a place; *character* is determined by how things are made and therefore depends on technical

realisation. It, however, must be noted that while spatial organisation does put certain limits on characterization the two are interdependent (Norberg-Shultz 1996:414).

Orientation and Identification

When man dwells he is simultaneously located in space and exposed to a certain environmental character. The two psychological functions involved may be called “orientation” and identification.” To gain an existential foothold man has to be able to orientate himself; he has to know where he is. But he also has to be able identify himself with the environment, that is, he has to know how he is in a certain place (Norberg-Shultz 1996:423).

The basic spatial structures which denote man’s orientation are *node*, *path*, and *district*. The combined relationship of these elements create an “environmental image,” and a good environmental image is what gives a person an important sense of emotional security. To be lost is the opposite of this feeling of security. The environmental quality that prevents man from feeling lost is “*imageability*; that shape, colour, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly-identified, powerfully-structured, highly useful mental images of the environment” (Norberg-Shultz 1996:423).

In our context “identification” means to become “friends” with a particular environment (Norberg-Shultz 1996:424).

Identification is the foundation for man’s sense of belonging, this identity is to a large extent created by a combination of places and things. Therefore is it very important that our environment consists of “objects of identification” as well as “spatial structures which facilitate orientation.” True belonging to a place presupposes The fully developed psychological functions of orientation and identification (Norberg-Shultz 1996:424).

2. critical regionalism

Like phenomenology, the celebration of particular qualities of *place* are also fundamental to the theory of critical regionalism. Critical regionalism places focus on the physical and cultural context; from regional to global levels. It also concentrates on an architecture that people can identify with as their own. “The awareness of a regional architecture as an idiom having a distinct identity and being associated with an identifiable group, and having this association used for further manipulating the group’s identity, goes as far back as ancient Greece.” (Lefaivre & Tzonis 2003:11)

“Regionalism becomes a constant process of negotiation between the local and the global on the many different issues

that traditionally made up regionalism” it is “this attitude of engagement rather than resistance, it leans towards integration rather than segregation.” For Lefaivre and Tzonis (2003:34) regionalism is a process of overcoming deeply ingrained, culturally inherited contradictions and conflicts. They describe Mumford’s regionalism as a dialectical process.

Mumford’s definition of regionalism has five important aspects (Lefaivre et al 2003:35):

1. Absolute historicism is counter productive. Mumford calls the attempt to duplicate historical forms “a piece of rank materialism” since the form contains no substance without its original social and historical context. Furthermore, its is counter productive to authenticity (Lefaivre et al 2003:35).
2. He rejects the purely aesthetic values of architecture: Regional forms make people feel at home (Lefaivre et al 2003:36).
3. Functional and sustainable technology of the present era should be used (Lefaivre et al 2003:36).
4. Community is multicultural.
5. The negotiation between the local and the global. Mumford believed that regionalism and globalism are mutually inclusive.

“To make the best use of local resources, we must often seek help from people of ideas or technical methods that often originate elsewhere. As with a human being, every culture must both be itself and transcend itself; it must make most of its limitations and pass beyond them; it must be open to fresh experience and yet it must maintain its integrity. In no other art is that process more sharply focused than in architecture.” (Lefaivre et al 2003:39)

intentions

Both Phenomenology and Critical Regionalism both suggest an approach to architecture that rejects meaningless form and one that emphasises the importance of creating places that people can personally identify with while still having relevance to their greater context. **It is the intention of this thesis to create unique, multifunctional places that stimulate the imagination and create the *genius loci* while illuminating the history of a place without resorting to imitation.**

The main focus of this thesis is on **how to adapt and reuse the Old Turbine Hall**; to address the connection between old and new architecture in a way that pays tribute to the original building and its heritage. Although the function of the existing building will change, it is important to **maintain the existing industrial character** and spatial qualities of the place. Where the additions should bring into focus these existing properties, in that way concretises the *genius loci* on an identifiable human scale which reveals the historical essence of the Old Turbine hall.