

CHAPTER 14

Is Anybody Home?

Anne Tervo

This essay considers the healing potential of Architecture through the gentle but persistent power of Systems Intelligence. The premises for this deliberation come from the mundane life of a dweller and her encounters in space. Home is seen as the interpreter of a person's inner world and as a potential catalyst for a change into a more humane and dignified life. Furthermore the process of building has been examined in relation to the act of dwelling. The purpose has been to emphasize the meaning of multiple layers of both material and immaterial life, created by the inhabitant through her being in a place. This relates architecture to the overlapping disciplines examining the meaning of place through all our senses and social connections. The essence of a home is seen to be comprised mainly of life enriched by unpredictable changes.

Introduction

The presumption that in Architecture, meaningful places contain more than can be captured by conventional means of architectural representation based on sight is brought up in this text. The ever growing amount of visual impulses in our environment has achieved an overwhelming victory in the field of Architecture as a growing tendency among the goals of creating built environment. As Pallasmaa points out, "modernist design at large has housed the intelligence and eye, but it has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless." (Pallasmaa 2005, p. 19) As opposed to the oversaturation of images, this essay is about sensitive places, built in the realm of longing for humanity, and their novel appearances with the help of architecture, as seen from the perspective of Systems Intelligence.

None of the grandiose places of the world are as true a stage for the following deliberations as the home, since there if anywhere it is possible to be in contact with one's own vulnerable humanity. As a common platform, we all have a relationship to a home. For many of us it is one of the most intimate and cherished realm of our life. Yet home contains countless connotations as well as combinations of altered social situations unveiling its complex nature. Examined from the perspective of Systems Intelligence, home reveals its inherent potential as the interpreter of this pulsating and organic concept.

The Prism of Architecture

In this essay, the synergistic relationship between Architecture and Systems Intelligence is examined through the concept of home. Architecture and especially the home has been considered a multifaceted concept, comprised not only of space, but of social relationships, behavioural motivations, feelings and dreams. Central to this way of thinking is a willingness to embrace the subjective experience related to the home. The active role of the subject is fundamental, its meaning further accentuated by the nurturing force of the home. "If we desire architecture to have an emancipating or healing role, instead of reinforcing the erosion of existential meaning, we must reflect on the multitude of secret ways in which the art of Architecture is tied to the cultural and mental reality of its time." (Pallasmaa 2005, p. 34).

Architecture and especially the home have been considered a multifaceted concept, comprised not only of space, but of social relationships, behavioural motivations, feelings and dreams.

The written works of the architects Juhani Pallasmaa, Christopher Alexander and Stewart Brand examine the primary resources in creating a meaningful environment. Each of them approaches the subject of matter in their own way, but they share the common denominator of the meaning of action, participation and the weight of a lived life, concepts that have opened up my own thinking. Representing a fairly traditional section of architecture, they operate with the tools created for an archaic interpretation of dignified life. Their decade's long works are freshly published. "Encounters" (2005) by Pallasmaa is a collection of essays written during the past 25 years. Alexander's "The Nature of Order" (2002) is a series of four books, wherein are collected his thoughts on the structure of life gathered over the last thirty years. The second book of this series, "The Process of Creating Life" has been inspiring when writing this essay. In "How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built" (1995), Brand studies Architecture in relation to the inevitable change in time, shedding light on the affection lavished on aged and used places. In addition, the origins of some of the tendencies of present-day Architecture, such as implementations of pervasive computing and especially situated design based on the same sensitive foundation as the work of the aforementioned architects, have made their contribution to the text in hand by opening new perspectives.

The architect Malcolm McCullough's ideas about the rising possibilities that Architecture is facing in the field of interaction design are presented in his book "Digital Ground" (2004). These ideas have been exceptionally influential, functioning as a welcoming connector between the ageless values of Architecture and its contemporary manifestations. Instead of exposing Architecture to the power of continuous change coming from outside its field, McCullough builds delicately on its tradition while refusing the vision of anytime-anyplace created by information technology. (McCullough 2004) Valuing "the power of context", a term established by Malcolm Gladwell (2002), McCullough ends up defining the current direction of the planning of spaces in relation to social context:

"The usability of well-made traditional places now appears as a rich basis for design of context-aware technology. Whether it is organizational, social, or domestic, space awaits rediscovery for its richness of social framing." (McCullough 2004, p. 174)

The adorable book titled "House as a Mirror of Self, Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home" (1995) by Clare Cooper Marcus has given me the courage and faith to deliberate the significance of the home as a tool to get closer to ourselves. "A core theme of this book and the stories within it is the notion that we are all – throughout our lives – striving toward a state of wholeness, of being wholly ourselves. Whether we are conscious of it or not, every relationship, event, mishap or

good fortune in our lives can be perceived as a “teaching”, guiding us towards being more and more fully who we are.” (Cooper Marcus 1995, p. 8)

Attachment in Architecture

When designers within the architectural and sociological professions have sought ways to produce meaningful and habitable environments, collaboration between inhabitants and designers has often seemed the appropriate way to develop generative interaction. However, at some point the end-product became detached from the original admirable goals. In the blooming spring of technological building innovations, we began to see proposals for new kinds of ways to approach the problematic of the specific place, quite often by designers coming from outside of the realm of Architecture. These designs roughly consisted of mere cubic meters in the form of mobile containers. Furthermore we learned that among us we have nomads who want to live with such instability. Likewise, airy and open loft-like spaces became homes worth pursuing. Manifesting liberation, tolerance and transparency, the open plan ended up stripping the spatial distribution of the rooms and new apartments became often valued by the amount of space they contain. “More space in domestic buildings is equated with freedom” (Brand 1995, p. 23). The alienation easily experienced in contemporary housing was enhanced and further delivered as a minimalist lifestyle, lacking in content, and finally becoming an established norm.

The alienation easily experienced in contemporary housing was enhanced and further delivered as a minimalist lifestyle, lacking in content, and finally becoming an established norm.

In relation to the topics discussed above it is tempting to observe the mobile boom in architecture that drifted away from actual problems of its own time, such as disaster relief inhabitation or providing shelter for the homeless. Instead it borrowed ingredients from the work environment and attacked one of housing design’s most valuable possessions, its permanence, while simultaneously artfully ridding itself of the *genius loci*. It is a pity, since we learn to inhabit a place on its own terms and are able to rethink and slow down the relationship between time and desire through the solid framework of the place.

According to Pallasmaa “our age has lost the awareness that the act of building inevitably involves a metaphysical message, a reflection of a view of the world and man’s relationship to the world. Buildings and other human acts are not dictated by purely practical needs – they always constitute a dialogue with the world and contribute to forming the relationship of the individual ego or the collective identity of a cultural community to time and the world.” (Pallasmaa 1980, p. 41) From this viewpoint an intervention that could reveal what is already there seems to be desirable. In the words of Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2006, p. 20) this can be found in the moment: “when the system is shaken, the latent beliefs might trigger a revolution, spreading like an epidemic. Given a small but critical change in the system, deeply held aspirations might suddenly leverage, adding exponentially to the momentum.”

It is encouraging to think that, despite all the architectural evolution spurred on by the progress of technology, human participation has retained the capability for solving many of the complicated and awkward social situations that often seem as much a part of a building as its physical elements. Aiming at ones “flourishment” (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006, p. 18) from the point of believing that it already exists, waiting to break out, creates a mental place in a nest of Systems Intelligence. Being able to remove oneself from the typically mundane argumentation on the built environment is one of the rewards for contemplating the union of Systems Intelligence and Architecture. Aiming at a richness of experiences with the help of more or less unexpected

situations comes close to enhancing the effect that qualitative aspects of the environment have on our behaviour. Sadly these are easily overshadowed by the precise quantitative aspects that are nevertheless often secondary when pursuing an environment that supports the inner growth of a person and hence the quality of life.

Feelings as Interpreters

“People tend to suppress that which they cannot express.” (Tuan 1995/1977, p. 7)

There exist numerous places, in our daily surroundings, where every one of us can feel alienated in a way similar to the loneliness experienced in a crowd. A kind of suitability test for spaces could be accomplished relatively simply and empirically by trying to figure out where we feel naturally comfortable or, on the other hand, what are the places in which it is fairly easy to feel poor, lonely or incomplete. But there is often something in the moment which can make it all better and quite often it is an impulse coming from another person. No matter how great the surroundings are, they are easily forgotten when the companion is even lovelier. Maybe you can picture yourself in some disastrous holiday destination frosted with all that an average tourist would need in order to get away from mundane daily tasks, and sense the humour in the air when you see the astonishment in your ally's face. It appears perhaps as a limit of built environment that its qualities are apparently so easily overshadowed by human contact. The moulding power of Architecture holds within itself the capability to facilitate or hinder human encounters in a space.

No matter how great the surroundings are, they are easily forgotten when the companion is even lovelier.

If we accept as a starting point that in some situations our feelings and intuitions tell us something about reality, then reinvesting trust in our sensitivity and instincts made vulnerable by the overestimation of accurate definition could become our goal. Instead of describing built environment with measurable dimensions, we could start to intentionally enhance our vocabulary of emotions. In this context it is not enough that something “looks great” and “sounds fantastic”. Instead we want to approach the essence of a place with devotion by insisting on tangible sensation.

Working from the perspective of Systems Intelligence, which “takes the idea of people's internal and movable world utterly seriously”, we grow up understanding that “unlike many forms of rationalism and objectivism, we do not fear the subjective or the emotional, the experiential or the phenomenological – indeed we embrace them. Therein lays the source of emergence.” (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006, p. 43–44) Strongly based on supporting the feelings of a person as a steady truth that should not be violated, Alexander has interpreted a feeling “as real and as definite as the fact of the sun coming over the horizon tomorrow morning” (Kohn 2002). Alexander's ever valid question remains: “why do we think of it [feeling] as something vague and evanescent, when actually it is so real?” (Kohn 2002)

The Processes of Architecture

The value-set of the built environment is known to vary according to the stage. On one hand there are the people with their scattered hopes, often lacking the vocabulary to dream big, and on the other, the professionals of the environment with few tools for stepping out of the flood of rules dictated by the limitations of reality. Hence in the profession of Architecture it is quite common to confront a client with the one-time possibility of having a home that fulfils their tacit dreams, yet

never managing to raise the conversation above the level of simplifying practicalities. Instead of this, we could try to lead the dialogue to a higher level and, at an early phase of the design task, find ways to keep the conversation abstract enough in order not to exclude more elusive possibilities.

In this respect the holistic way of examining life through work as an architect, represented by Alexander, has been refreshing. The comprehensive theory of the process of building that Alexander has created has a connection to the theory of Systems Intelligence, through the ability to enhance the power of an unfolding situation as something that changes the whole dynamic of the process. Relying on the sensitivity of signals and person's ability to react to them in an unexpected yet appropriate manner reveals the essence of both concepts.

The foundation of Alexander's thinking is laid in the interpretation of the order inherent in the environment. He postulates (Alexander 2002a) that all life is structural using as his evidence the patterns of natural phenomena, which he then applies to the built environment. According to him life is comprised of fifteen properties which, when intertwined, create living centres. His way of thinking is about infinite progress, which developed through recognizing the process as the binding factor inside the living thing. This process is related to time and our understanding of ourselves as inseparable parts of the whole: "When the structure is living we feel the echo of our own aliveness in response to it." (Alexander 2005a)

Essentially Alexander does not make the artificial distinction between the theory and the practice of Architecture. The quality of the man-made environment can be traced to the beauty of the process behind it. A prominent feature in Alexander's thinking is his systematic viewpoint through which he observes and explains our built environment, though his methods may sometimes seem laboured. Constant movement over the identified barriers of the discipline of Architecture appears to happen for him without trouble, but in reality he has struggled his way through persistent resistance coming mainly from the academic world. (Kohn 2002)

The dynamic process of unfolding structure is linked to the experience of a place, something that is typically respected in the world of Architecture. These features enhance energy as opposed to stability. An easy, rhythmic movement over gently sloping stairs or a lazy glance into the distance over lower rooftops are examples of ways to experience spatial dynamics. Through the examination of one's actions inside a space our bodily experiences become the means of making sense of the situation. Thus the experiences of architecture "seem to have a verb form rather than being nouns." (Pallasmaa 1994, p. 35)

"...an architect internalizes a building in his body; movement, balance, distance and scale are felt unconsciously through the body as tension in the muscular system and in the positions of the skeleton and inner organs. As the work interacts with the body of the observer the experience mirrors the bodily sensations of the maker. Consequently, architecture is communication from the body of the architect to the body of inhabitant". (Pallasmaa 1994, p. 36)

With intention comes process if we are to follow Alexander's method of making a house. He is prepared to react tirelessly to the unfolding situations on a building site asking: "what is the most important thing I have to do next, which will have the best effect on the life of the house?" The rest is simple: "Then you do it. I am looking at the front door, and I ask myself how I would

The inner life of the architect and the outcome of his work appear to be balancing between life as a child and as a matured soul.

like to walk from the street to the front door. Then I make the steps in the right place.” (Alexander 2002b, p. 129)

In a situation where we do not have the possibility to build gradually over time, one option is to proceed using imagination. Taking into account the laborious process of getting permission to make a certain kind of building, much of the resistance towards Alexander’s work can be attributed to his highly idealized operating environment where the architect has the option of instantly reacting to the process of building. This reality enhances the importance of dreaming and imagining as primary motivations for moulding the environment. However, the kind of dreaming suggested is not just any kind of daydreaming, but specifically related to a certain place and the people whose every-day-life it touches; the “life that was to be lived in them”. (Rasmussen 1974/1959, p. 157)

The motives behind Alexander’s and Pallasmaa’s actions are themselves familiar to the profession of Architecture. We all want the environment to become more understandable and suitable for each one of us. Yet we need a way to expose ourselves to the process that weaves itself into the built environment. In this respect the method Alexander is suggesting is a beginning, somewhere to start looking for a solution for the often chaotic conditions of a design task. Somewhat systems intelligently, Alexander argues the undeniable importance of knowing yourself in order to create life in the form of a built environment with the capacity to touch us. It seems like he, through establishing a causal connection between a person and her output, refuses to recognize the dualistic separation of the mind and body. References to one’s childhood experiences in a home (Pallasmaa 2005b, Cooper Marcus 1995) support both the intact process of perceiving yourself as well as the intentions behind the places we create. The inner life of the architect and the outcome of his work appear to be balancing between life as a child and as a matured soul.

Aiming for Integrity

Seeking a way out of the muteness of contemporary buildings from the past is not a new idea in itself, but the way it is represented by both Alexander and Brand as the beginning of a generative dialogue that accepts past failures while concentrating on doing better next time is worth examining. If Alexander questions the underestimation of feelings, Brand finds a possibly even more effective way of figuring out the importance of a building, through inspecting the mind of a preservationist. His way of getting to the core comes out of the question: “What makes a building come to be loved?” This is to be followed by action: “And they [preservationists] act on what they learn.” (Brand 1995, p. 90) He portrays a worldview dictated by the understanding of the passing moment, as opposed to the simplified decision-result leapfrogging that we seem to be constantly exposed to. Constructing becomes more like travelling: no one really knows what awaits us until we get there. Yet for some reason we are tempted to believe that someone does.

“What makes a building come to be loved?”

When getting to know Alexander’s written work, he could easily be called an idealist. Instead of suggesting new ways of building Alexander challenges us with a continuous, self-correcting process of building. In all his efforts he aims at combining our world as one single entity that is constituted from intertwining smaller unities. His world is not made of stable and archived parts, but is constantly influenced by every single movement. It can be fostered, but only by a gentle though persistent focus on the deep structures of life. Much the same can be said about the concept of Systems Intelligence. The critique that Alexander’s work gains is often based on this very same fact; for some reason it seems to be hard to accept that there could be a comprehensive explanation about the way life is constructed. I’d seriously like to ask, wouldn’t that be lovely?

Getting Old

Affection to ageing buildings is one of the issues raised by Brand. As a builder himself, he has found his own way to rebuild and inhabit “Low Road Buildings” that without his care and need for bettering a place would have had a totally different history. “Age plus adaptivity is what makes a building come to be loved. The building learns from its occupants and they learn from it”. He goes on: “Admiration is from a distance and brief, while love is up close and cumulative. New buildings should be judged not just what they are, but what they are capable of becoming. Old buildings should get credit for how they played their options.” Brand is being systems intelligent in a very precise meaning of the term. We ought to see the vast amount of possibilities on offer, but cannot help but be shackled by the control of visual impulses. “The conversion will be difficult because it is fundamental. The transition from image architecture to process architecture is a leap from the certainties of controllable things in space to the self-organizing complexities of an endlessly revelling and unravelling skein of relationships over time. Buildings have lives of their own.” (Brand 1995, p. 71).

Referring to inevitable change over time, Brand asks: “While all buildings change with time, only some buildings improve. What makes the difference between a building that gets steadily better and one that gets steadily worse?” (Brand 1995, p. 23) We can visualize before our eyes a cavalcade of altered places. Some of them we find delicately realized, others are less successful. Beyond the subjective opinions based on different criteria such as values of elaborate preservation or aesthetic perception there could be a more humane way of estimating the built environment. Is it possible that we just let go the idea of the importance of personal opinion, especially when examining homes, and try to value the heartwarming effort of the person or family in order to better their lives? Instead of strengthening the hypersensitivity of the environment by limiting possibilities from the point of accepted choices, feeling ones need to improve surroundings of every-day life could give rise to a new way of appreciating a person’s inner dreams.

We invite new opportunities for social situations as well as lose touch of the old ones. This way we create memories, good or bad, the ones we long for or feel relieved to get rid of.

In this respect, there could be something real behind the thought that the objects or ready-made elements done for no one special signal a silent message that the human touch is replaced by something less meaningful. The resulting modern environment is often monotonous and unlike older towns contains few charming surprises (Norberg-Schultz 1980, pp. 189–190). Somehow we seem to intuitively linger on pieces of art or any artefact in general, sensing their uniqueness. Many ageing houses have, for a reason, an atmosphere of the past that embraces our own collective history, where “we glimpse the world of previous generations” (Brand 1995, p. 90). We can condense the content of an existing place further by focusing on “habits rather than novelties, on people rather than machines, and on the richness of existing places than invention from thin air”. (McCullough 2004, p. 24)

Comprising the Home

We shape our environment more or less intentionally and permanently. The most convenient way is by changing the way our home is furnished. We invite new opportunities for social situations as well as lose touch of the old ones. This way we create memories, good or bad, the ones we long for or feel relieved to get rid of. Describing a home as “not merely an object or a building, but a diffuse and complex condition, integrating memories and images, desires and fears, the past and the present” relates it to “a set of rituals, personal rhythms, and routines of everyday

life" (Pallasmaa 1994a, p. 114). The role of the architect has been seen as "a sort of theatrical producer, the man who plans the setting for our lives. Innumerable circumstances are dependent on the way he arranges this setting for us. When his intentions succeed, he is like the perfect host who provides every comfort for his guests so that living with him is a happy experience." (Rasmussen 1974/1959, p. 10) However, the task in hand is demanding since even though it may be argued that the basic needs for all people are the same, there is no universal way of interpreting the mundane, culture-bound life of "ordinary people" and their "natural way of acting". (Rasmussen 1974/1959, p. 10)

Home becomes comprised of the immaterial elements such as "time dimension and continuum, it is a gradual product of the family's and individual's adoption to the world." (Pallasmaa 1994a, p. 115) As a private realm of the inhabitant "the substance home is secreted by the dweller, as it were, within the framework of the dwelling. Home is an expression of the dweller's personality and his unique patterns of life. Consequently, the essence of home is closer to life itself than to the artifact of the house." (Pallasmaa 1994a, p. 114) Cooper Marcus describes the home in a way similar to Pallasmaa when saying that the choices we make in our homes "represent more or less conscious decisions about personal expression, just as our clothes or hairstyle or the kind of car we drive are conscious expressions of our values. What is more intriguing and less well recognized is that we also express the aspects of our unconscious in the home environment, just as we do in dreams". (Cooper Marcus 1995, p. 7) Understanding the connection between ourselves and the environment we create becomes irresistibly fascinating. Consisting of multiple meanings, crisscrossing dreams, experiences lived through in the past and future expectations, home is the part of our world where we can find ourselves.

"Our obsessively materialist and quasi-rational age has turned buildings into purely instrumental constructions, "machines for living", serving merely the practicalities of life. Architecture's aspiration into a realm of aesthetics only seems to emphasize the understanding of buildings as visually beautified objects of utility. We have almost forgotten that the task of our houses is not only to provide physical shelter and bodily comfort. A house does not solely constitute our "third skin", an externalization of our bodily functions; it is also an externalization of our imagination, memory and conceptual capacities." (Pallasmaa 2000, p. 59)

How could these layers of life that are being developed in time and quite often inside us, find their expression in contemporary housing projects? Is it possible to give delicate suggestions about the vast amount of wonderful possibilities that the new inhabitant has when creating a home? How can I as an architect encounter the dweller and learn to ask the right questions, at the right time and for the right reasons? Perhaps it is needed to reconsider the importance of narrative as means of transmitting the intentions and goals of a building project materialized in a specific place. Letting a person know about the fantasies that are being interwoven into a building could serve a valuable purpose. It is no miracle that you can sense the rotation of the day inside a well-designed space, but it is close to one when you can find new ways to express yourself in a home. Different places offer different possibilities and emphasizing this aspect could be a start for enabling fruitful encounters between a client and an architect.

*How can I as an architect
encounter the dweller and learn to
ask the right questions, at the
right time and for the right
reasons?*

"Fully to address the dangers of aestheticism, reductive functionalism and either conventional or experimental formalism, architecture must consider seriously the potential of narrative as the structure of human life, a poetic vision realized in space-time. The architect, in a sense, now must also write "script" for his dramas, regardless of whether this

becomes an explicit or implicit transformation of the “official” building program.” (Pérez-Cómez 1994, p. 23)

Alexander’s answer, to the questions related to the process of building, is to look more carefully at the prevalent situation as follows: “In a living system what is to be always grows out of what is, supports it, extends its structure smoothly and continuously, elaborates new forms – sometimes starting new form – but without ever violating the structure that exists”. He is convinced of the quality of the results emanating from this delicate process: “In Art as in Architecture, our most intelligent and most wonderful creations come about, when we draw them out as extensions and enhancements of what exists already.” (Alexander 2005, p. 136) Alexander also writes extensively about topics that architects quite often find irrelevant to their work. These themes are like variations of the unexpected inputs that change the dynamic of a situation, something very familiar to the concept of Systems Intelligence (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006). In the Architecture of Alexander these seemingly modest themes like window sills or a vase of flowers are examples of the kinds of elements in our every-day life that can make a difference. But we could just as well be using as examples the passing encounters in our daily life, the meaning of which varies for each person and is difficult to objectively estimate. Feeling the consequences of ones actions in relation to the developing moment can be seen as understanding the same wholeness that is “the object of good architecture is to create integrated wholes”. (Rasmussen 1974/1959, p. 32)

Careful examination of our environment without making any distinction between features according to the inherent value of the object feels like an example of inner strength that is constituted of a higher goal. In Alexander’s environmental and architectural thinking it is making the value distinctions between places that are more alive than others. This way Alexander strikes the soft inner tissue of many architects and often faces rejection, since what he basically suggests is that all the values based solely on form and function are useless in the search for irresistibly touching and intuitively sensuous life.

Tempting Places

A person’s relationship to a home is emotional and delicate in many ways varying according to changing social situations. In the home is reflected the alteration of our personal lives in a very elaborate way (Cooper Marcus 1995). Several writers have also brought up the meaning of one’s childhood home that many of us mentally inhabit with increasing intensity and frequency, especially when finding ourselves homeless in brand new places. Expressing the meaning of “emotional attachment” in relation to specific places, Cooper Marcus points out “the frequently overlooked premise: As we change and grow throughout our lives, our psychological development is punctuated not only by meaningful emotional relationships with people, but also close, affective ties with a number of significant physical environments, beginning in childhood”. (Cooper Marcus 1995, p. 2) Rejecting one’s private realm in a severe personal crisis is just one example of the complex phenomena connecting behavioural sciences and architecture. These ideas are carried further by McCullough:

“Framing the interplay of embodied behaviours remains the most important function of environment. Building instrumentalizes and civilizes social distance. Architecture consists of built social relations. Its behavioral framing establishes who may see whom and under what protocols.” (McCullough 2004, p. 39)

Following the subtle, inquiring, unfolding change happening between the dwellers and a house after they have started to make it their home, patiently, day by day reveals the important rituals of a home. Movement and the act of dwelling become the ways of rooting a person to a place, and

as Rasmussen has pointed out: "If we believe that the object of architecture is to provide a framework for people's lives, then the rooms in our houses, and the relation between them, must be determined by the way we will live in them and move through them" (Rasmussen 1974 [1959], p. 136). Moving from one enclosed space to the other can be seen as a metaphor for moving from one world to the next:

"Deep architectural images are acts instead of objects. As a consequence of this implied activity, a bodily reaction is an inseparable aspect of the experience of architecture. A meaningful architectural experience is not simply a series of retinal images. The "elements" of architecture are not visual units or gestalt; they are confrontations and encounters. A building is encountered; it is approached, confronted, related to one's body, moved through, and utilized as conditions for other things. Architecture directs scales, and frames actions, perceptions, and thoughts."(Pallasmaa 2000, p. 60)

Enhancing the possibility of a home being renewed, without losing the qualities that are essential for a person in understanding his place in the world, has become a tendency of Architecture that celebrates humanity. Discounting the rising possibilities that Architecture has gained through this development could mean losing the opportunity to renew the profession itself in way that still leans on its deep values since "like most etiquette, architecture exists not out of pompousness, but because it lets life proceed more easily."(McCullough 2004, p. 118)

*There is something magical in
the places that seduce us into
different ways of being.*

There is something magical in the places that seduce us into different ways of being. Many of us start to lower our voice when entering a place of worship and you quite seldom meet someone under your blanket who shouts sweet words in to your ear. Magnetic places feel like sitting face to face with a highly charismatic person; within a few minutes one begins to adapt the other person's mood (Gladwell 2004, p. 86) Getting carried away by the atmosphere of a place reveals its potential to influence us and thus to improve the quality of our lives. One might aim to use whatever methods available, be they inherently human and perhaps traditional or born of the innovations of information technology, to enhance the influence of a place and its power to draw one deeper into the fantasy world of Architecture.

When enhancing the experience of a place, the aim is not, however, to create theme-park homes. A great deal of the essence of a home derives from a sustainable, steady rhythm of change, akin to a relaxed heartbeat. "Satisfaction comes not just from meeting expectations, but also from changing them. Predictable formulas do not always produce satisfaction. Thus there is a paradox in the connotation of "experience design". "Few of us want our experience predigested.", writes McCullough (2004, p. 166). On the other hand a home can teach its residents about the world through its permanence. Obviously he often desired flexibility of spaces easily results in a few fairly good options instead of one truly though out solution. Being in a place and sensing it becomes essential and one begins to be guided by the house: "You must dwell in the rooms, feel how they close about you, observe how you are naturally led from one to the other." (Rasmussen 1974/1959, p. 33)

It is not surprising that references to theatrical settings are familiar among the literature of Architecture. When home is the stage, all hues become more powerful. Being in some ways the most remote, hidden place imaginable, the home has become both protector and protected. The reason why many of us stop and fall silent in front of destroyed homes and abandoned houses reveals these places' potential to describe some part of us.

“While a house as a symbol of our place in society has been discussed and researched by social scientists, the house interior and its content as a mirror of our inner psychological self have received less attention.” (Cooper Marcus 1995, p. 9)

Perspectives

Balancing between the sensitive content of the ageless values of Architecture and the novel possibilities arising from the intervention of technology has become one of the most difficult, as well as intriguing, tasks of Architecture. In our academic world there seem to be multiple poles that somewhat surprisingly do not feel drawn to each other. In this sense the written work of interdisciplinary fields of Architecture has opened up paths toward a new mental place, from which to look far away to the tops of other heroic mountains. Finding one’s place in the middle of Architecture, behavioural science and interaction design, and being further able to use the understanding and knowledge gained from an architectural education, will hopefully start to show its strength and capability. The fear of sharing disappears when losing our core-knowledge based grip and decision-making power is not on the table. As McCullough (2004, p. 12) expresses the need:

“In all this, process is still not present as something essential, only as something mechanical, In our profession of architecture there is no conception, yet, of process itself as budding, flowering, as an unpredictable, unquenchable unfolding through which the future grows from the present in a way that is dominated by the goodness of the moment.”

The hints at the myriad possibilities offered by new technologies are in a way the most whimsical part of this essay. They are a starting point for inquiries into new ways of expressing one’s personality as well as a platform for improving the processes and protocols of housing development. Perhaps what they also are is tools, and nothing more. Highly interesting and fascinating ways to coax more and different experiences out of Architecture, but not opposed to its traditions as such, anymore than a laser-cutter is opposed to a hammer.

“We keep in mind as well the dangers of unrestrained technological enthusiasm. And yet, we feel that it is particularly urgent now that architects address disciplines outside their own, and particularly those concerned with relevant technologies and organizational behaviours. As a generalist discipline concerned with environments and spatial organizations, whose duty is often to work with other specialist disciplines, architecture today looks forward many new opportunities if it can successfully embrace an expanded field of operations. This likewise sets architecture in a privileged position from which to reflect on contemporary society, in that any claim to be critical needs to be deeply informed of that which it seeks to criticise.” (Hookway and Perry 2006, p. 77)

New opportunities open up possibilities to look again at the steady foundations of Architecture. In this sense fascinating light installations of James Turrell that create the appearance of whole spaces in total voids has sparked an interest in the meaning of building elements. Especially when they act as creators of concepts such as privacy and stability. Furthermore McCullough invites us to consider “places with senses” (2005, p. 93) that at their simplest mean environments that change according to the users preferences. A shared physical place experiences a metamorphosis with the help of technology and turns for a moment into someone’s private place. We can think of these places in different contexts, like shared bathrooms or other facilities that can be used by many people. When we develop these ideas further we run into interesting questions about the meaning of building elements in relation to our understanding of the world. We can ask if it is important that we can physically lean on a wall that releases the temperature of a past moment, or could it be replaced by a dense shadow? Do we respect a place more when we can see the ways it

has been used before us? If you sit long enough, perhaps a lifetime, on the same bench, you leave a steady mark of your life. Is it possible to sense the presence of others in a home after a wonderful evening, and if so, what kind of message is the cork of a bottle found under your table next week?

We confront a world of illusions that may sometimes have value in themselves. The ability to hide as part of the experience of privacy becomes a privilege in an environment where everything is transparent. How can a home support one's right not to share a moment if it has only one staircase and no alternate, mysterious routes to choose from? Would it be possible, when planning a house, to make allowance for and even encourage holding on to the secrets of the dwellers? Can I reinvent the meaning of the secret corridor as a liberator from unnecessary confrontations and if so, where does this ride end? A large part of life is the choosing of what to show and what to hide in ones relationships. Even pretence has a valid and not inevitably sinister place in our social lives.

*We confront a world of illusions
that may sometimes have value
in themselves.*

Settling Down

Staying with the themes of emotional ambition may at first appear frustratingly abstract when seen from the point of view of practical architecture. However, one needs concepts that emancipate thinking and have the potential to give rise to new outcomes. The contribution of Systems Intelligence to an architect, when inspected from the point of a design process or the actual building phase, is losing one's inner distrust in the constantly changing conditions. Instead of seeing a change as a sign of instability, it becomes a proof of life. One is consciously influenced by each moment, the best of them turning out to be your muses.

Approaching the concept of home from the perspective of the innumerable sensations it holds turns out to be a task that encourages persistent inquiry. It is the part of architecture and life that my personal interests reside in and the subject I feel most comfortable with, since it is the part of life I can best get a hold of. The meaning of home related to one's growth as a person is exceptionally inspiring.

I fall silent when I think, on this exceptionally warm winter, of the emptiness of my first childhood home without the protection of snow. Never in this house's life has nature given it so little comfort. We used to measure and time the day and its activities according to the amount of snow falling, causing an unforeseen amount of work as well as pleasure.

References

- ALEXANDER CHRISTOPHER. 2002a. *The Nature of Order. Book One: The Phenomenon of Life*. Berkeley: The Center for Environmental Structure.
- ALEXANDER CHRISTOPHER. 2002b. *The Nature of Order. Book Two: The Process of Creating Life*. Berkeley: The Center for Environmental Structure.
- BRAND STEWART. 1995. *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They Are Built*. Penguin Books.
- GLADWELL MALCOLM. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Black Bay Books / Little, Brown and Company.
- COOPER MARCUS CLARE. 1995. *The House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of a Home*. Berkeley: Canary Press.

- HOOKWAY BRANDEN AND CHRIS PERRY. 2006. Responsive Systems Appliance Architecture. *AD, The Collective Intelligence in Design*, vol. 76, no. 5, pp. 74–79.
- HÄMÄLÄINEN RAIMO P. AND ESA SAARINEN. 2006. Systems intelligence: A key competence in human action and organizational life. *Reflections: The SoL Journal*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 17–28. Reprinted in *Systems Intelligence in Leadership and Everyday Life*, Raimo P. Hämmäläinen and Esa Saarinen, eds., 2007, Espoo: Systems Analysis Laboratory, Helsinki University of Technology.
- HÄMÄLÄINEN RAIMO P. AND ESA SAARINEN. 2007. Systems intelligence: A key competence in human action and organizational life. In *Systems Intelligence in Leadership and Everyday Life*, Raimo P. Hämmäläinen and Esa Saarinen, eds., Espoo: Systems Analysis Laboratory, Helsinki University of Technology, pp. 39–50.
- KOHN WENDY. 2002. *Wendy Kohn interviews Christopher Alexander on The Nature of Order*. <http://www.patternlanguage.com/> (accessed 27 February 2006)
- MCCULLOUGH MALCOLM. 2004. *Digital Ground: Architecture, Pervasive Computing, and Environmental Knowing*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- NORBERG-SCHULTZ CHRISTIAN. 1980. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. London: Academy Editions.
- PALLASMAA JUHANI. 1980. The two languages of architecture: Elements of a bio-cultural approach to architecture. Reprinted in *Encounters: Architectural Essays*, Juhani Pallasmaa, 2005, Hämeenlinna: Building Information Ltd.
- PALLASMAA JUHANI. 1994a. Identity, intimacy, and domicile: Notes on the phenomenology of home. Reprinted in *Encounters: Architectural Essays*, Juhani Pallasmaa, 2005, Hämeenlinna: Building Information Ltd.
- PALLASMAA JUHANI. 1994b. The architecture of seven senses. *Architecture and Urbanism: Questions of Perception*, special issue, July 1994. pp. 27–37.
- PALLASMAA JUHANI. 2000. Stairways of the mind. Reprinted in *Encounters: Architectural Essays*, Juhani Pallasmaa, 2005, Hämeenlinna: Building Information Ltd.
- PALLASMAA JUHANI. 2005. *The Eyes of the Skin*. West Sussex: Wile-Academy, a division of John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- PÉREZ-CÓMEZ ALBERTO. 1994. The space and architecture: Meaning as presence and representation. *Architecture and Urbanism (a+u): Questions of Perception*, special issue, July 1994. pp. 7–25.
- RASMUSSEN STEEN EILER. 1974/1959. *Experiencing Architecture*. The MIT Press.
- TUAN YI-FU. 1995/1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Author

The author is a graduate from the Department of Architecture, Helsinki University of Technology where she now teaches housing. She is currently pursuing a PhD in environmental psychology.

atervo@gmail.com