The Space of Flows: Manuel Castells – 23 Nov

The Space of Flows (text from the presentation presented in class)

As we have raised the question about 4th dimension in architecture, or possibly N-th dimension, according to Manuel Castells, the author of The Rise of the Network Society, we can find one possible answer to this question which is embedded in his concept of the space of flows. In general, the fourth dimension, by its definition, is interpreted as time. In Castells opinion, the 4th dimension is timeless time. And timeless time belongs to what he calls space of flows.

Let me first give a brief introduction to the author:

Manuel Castells (born in Spain, 1942) is a sociologist especially associated with information society and communications research. His work focus on areas of urban sociology, organization studies, internet studies, social movements, sociology of culture, and political economy. Castells was a key developer of the variety of Marxist urban sociology that emphasizes the role of social movements in the conflictive transformation of the city. In 1989, he introduced the concept of the "space of flows". In the 1990s, he combined his two research in the book titled: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, published as a trilogy, The Rise of the Network Society (1996), The Power of Identity (1997), and End of Millennium (1998).

So let’s talk about the concept of space of flows. To approach the complexity of this concept, let us proceed step by step, starting with defining what is space. Space, in social theory, cannot be defined without reference to social practices. It is an expression of society, and is a material product, in relationship to other material products – including people – who engage in historically determined social relationships that provide space with a form, a function, and a social meaning. In conclusion, space, in social theory, is the material support of time-sharing social practices. The term “time-sharing social practices” refers to space bringing together those practices that are simultaneous in time.

Since our society is constructed around flows: flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organization interaction, flows of images, sounds, and symbols, the spaces of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows.

There are three layers of space of flows. The first layer is constituted of circuit of electronic impulses. This is the material support of space of flows. It includes microelectronics, telecommunication, broadcasting, etc. which is all based on information technologies.

The second layer of space of flows is constituted by nodes and hubs. This suggested
that the space of flows is not placeless. It is based on an electronic network that links up specific places. Some places play the role of exchangers and coordinators. Both nodes and hubs are hierarchically organized according to their relative weight in the network.

The third layer refers to the spatial organization of the dominant, managerial elites. The elites represent power and wealth, which is projected throughout the world, and while ordinary people’s life and experience rooted in places, culture, and history.

If we agree that the space of flows is the dominant spatial form in the network society, then architecture and design are to be redefined. The space of flow blurs the relationship between architecture and society. Since the spatial manifestation of dominant interests now takes place around the world and across cultures, the uprooting of experience, history, and specific culture as the background of meaning is leading to the generalization of non-historical, non-cultural architecture.

The work from postmodernism is considered examples for this concept, since it declares the end of all systems of meaning. And it creates a mixture of elements that looks for harmony through transhistorical reformation. Since the boundary of architecture and society is blurred, instead of designing space of places, postmodernism has expressed the new ideology of designing space of flows.

Examples of works that we are all familiar with:

AT&T building in NY city by Philip Johnson

Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans, by Charles Moore

All these examples are architecture itself considered as space of flows. However, architecture could also be regarded as a media, through which space of flows could be experienced. In this case, architecture is considered the neutral, pure and transparent form that exposes the solitude of the space of flows.

Barcelona Airport, by Ricardo Bofill

Madrid AVE Station, by Rafael Moneo

Castells believes that these two architectures communicate with their user through silence. The Barcelona airport by using marble floor, dark glass façade, and glass separating panels and its big open space, left the passengers in the middle of the space of flows. The new Madrid AVE station was renovated into a new indoor palm tree park. The real station with the high speed train is adjacent to this park. The
contrast between the train and the park makes the segment of space of flows becomes exposed.

At the end of this article, the author made a comparison between the space of flows and space of places. The space of places is a locale whose form, function and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity, where for space of flows, such physical contiguity is not needed.

The relationship between the space of flows and space of places, between simultaneous globalization and localization are not predetermined in their outcome.

The space of flows, which itself is a network free from history, culture or social context; tend to impose its logic over the scattered, segmented places. Here the author went back to his sociologist point of view and express his concern about the co-existence of globalization and localization. The globalization network tends to impose its logic over the local, and he believes that cultural and physical bridges have to be built in order to connect this gap.

1. Is there a way of bridging the gap between globalization and localization?

Space and Power: Ryan Banham – 23 Nov

Space and time (text from the presentation presented in class)

Space as an essential element in architecture has existed in a basic primary form since the time man learnt how to build, but space as a quality of architectural composition did not develop until the middle of the 18th century.

Before that during the classical period the only dimensions know to architecture was structure and proportion. Space as a term was used only with respect to the decorations in the interiors to indicate the irregular and unstructured surfaces.

The 18th century saw the rise of space as a dimension in architecture through the introduction of the romantic gardens; the spaces here too were irregular and unstructured but had more of a positive quality to them.

The concept of architectural space was completely foreign to the English and French way of thinking; it was the German theorists of the 19th century who introduced “space” in its modern architectural sense. That is “the spatial design of rooms as opposed to solid surfaces circumscribing them”. Hegel in the 1820’s
referred to buildings as “limiting and enclosing a defined space”. The notion of space was developed to its greatest extent as a technique of art criticism by the German art historian Heinrich Wolffin. But it was Frank Lloyd Wright who demonstrated the concept of Wolffin’s space most effectively.

20th century:

Frank Lloyd Wright:
The larkins building was a simple adaptation of the traditional interior of a non-conformist church to a more modern and materialistic function. By FLW

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe:
He developed a great sensitivity to those spatial relationships which could be achieved with thin solid planes and transparent glass

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion.

H.P Berlage: a rationalist form the 19th century who as profoundly influenced by FLW.

In his essays discussed “the art of the master builder lies in the creation of space, not the sketching of facades”. Hence forth space was regarded as a twin partner with structure in the creation of architectural composition.

NEW CONCEPTS OF SPACE:

Sigfried Giedion analysis of modern developments:
Described “space and time” as an essential element in architecture, yet he himself was vague about the precise way this new space concept operates.

Paul Rudolph believed that the concept of space and time has been the motivating force behind much of “the international style”. While John Burchard and Albert Bush Brown contended that even the serious efforts of Giedion had been unable to build connections between Gropius Werkbund building at cologne and the econdite of “space-time” of Einstein.

The implications of this new theory of “space and time” in architecture was difficult to analysis as it meant different things to those who used it, it may correctly be compared to Einstein’s theory of relativity.

Closely related to the analogy with Einstein’s theory of relativity is the notion that modern architecture is characterized by the use of the 4th dimension.

It was Le Corbusier who in “The New World of Space” discussed the 4th dimension in architecture being time, considered as a measure of displacement and as buildings do not move the 4th component would necessarily be contributed by the observer. While Giedion states that one can appreciate both inside and outside of the structure simultaneously by standing at the same place a seemingly contradictory distention which depends in the fact on the extent to which the structure is sheltered in glass.

Giedion states it is impossible to comprehend Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoie by a view from a single point as he says it is quite literally construction in space and time – the body of the house has been hollowed out in all directions so a cross section at any point shows the inner and outer space penetration.

Le Corbusier is said to have derived his principles from Arab Architecture his work too is appreciated whilst walking, and it is only thus while moving around that the observer sees the architectural disposition.

Giedion’s space and time paradigm might be translated as: modern architecture is characterized by fact that the inside of a modern building can often be appreciated from single external view points while the external totality can only be appreciated as a sequence of visual impressions.

This was the converse of what occurred when one looked at traditional buildings of similar purpose; for in a typical Renaissance villa as appose to the Villa Savoie, the totality of the outside of the building is intelligible from a single view point.
where as the interior can only be appreciated as a sequence of visual impressions.

One considerers the creation of space to be indistinguishable from the depiction of space.

The architects before 1400 only created space that was 2 dimensional

Then between 1500 to 1750 (Renaissance period) 3 dimensional architecture was created.

Then in the baroque period saw the rise of the 4th dimension in architecture.

Infinity had begun to enter the considered much before in art than in architecture. The cubist painters in Paris began to paint whole space by 1911-1912.

1. Is parametric architecture attempting to make the observer synesthetic?

Building, Dwelling, Thinking: Martin Heidegger – 26 Nov.

The author discusses the problem of dwelling and its relationship with building. He attempts to develop an understanding the original meaning of the word. He states that humans must learn to dwell and that dwelling is the basic instinct of being. He goes on to explain that it come naturally to man to occupy space and that this instinct has taught man how to build.

He also states the function of intension in dwelling that, if the intention exists that at some level we are already there. He takes the notion of dwelling to another level were in it’s the intention that sparks the idea of dwelling and that if the intention exists then so does the dwelling.

According to this piece of writing Heidegger tries to explain that intentions are spatial in nature and he tries to explain how space has never been an external object or an inner experience.

1. Can space be occupied in memory?

The Phenomenon Of Place: Christian Norberg Schulz – 26 Nov.

The author opens by discussing that every place has a phenomenon of its own. The also talks about how spaces with discrete function also may be confused with each other because the
functions might be more complicated than expected. Even spaces with obvious functions like private and public are often may have multi layered functions of space.

The authors also talks about private and public sections of a building may be linked and the definition of space in terms of boundaries and not location alone.

The author through the article attempts to highlight the fact that architecture cannot be fully defined by the built environment alone but in fact it is the transition spaces that link the multiple functions and spaces inside the built form that create the true experience of the architectural form.

The Production of Space: Henri Lefebvre- 30 Nov.

The author attempts to explain the notion of space from the Bauhaus space. He says that it was the Bauhaus that truly developed the notion of global space, according to the notion the build form cannot be segregated from the basic objects like windows, doors. He also says that it was the Bauhaus who taught us to view the built form in multiple perspectives.

He explains that this created a consciousness of space while exploring it. And global space established itself in the abstract as a void that is to be filled.

The reading also goes over Giedion’s evolution of space. He ends with a discussion of the nature and purpose of space. Space exists to navigate bodies along routes and across distances.

1. Has the true definition of space not really changed since the Bauhaus?

Situationist Space: Tom McDonough - 30 Nov.

The situationist read space in disjointed way. For example the Naked City developed by Guy Debord which is basically a disjointed map of Paris and lacks a sense of direction and orientation. The author explains this kind of mapping as a way to free the reader from the standard tools such as scale and orientation. But in fact help in the reader to experience the change in space as he perceives it.
This concept allows one to look at space in a different way and experience it differently and to be read in the context of neighborhood and beyond. This concept of understanding space cannot be standardized as each individual perceives space differently depending on his social experiences.

1. After what level of disjointing and fragmentation does it become hard to read space all together?

**The Rise of Network Culture: Kazys Varnelis – 3 Dec**

The author introduces the article by explain how the network technology has affected the society. The line between the virtual world and the real world is becoming blurred by the day. He looks at — a culture in which the daily existence of humans is interweaved with the use of and connection to machines.

The increase of online interactions has changed the nature of interaction between people. While personal interactions have reduced virtual interactions have sky rocketed. From the rise of social networking sites and virtual gaming portals alone one can estimate the shift in the spectrum of communication.

We are truly living a network experience.

**Biological Sovereignty: Eugene Thacker- 3 Dec**

The author addresses the issues of biological sovereignty and its effects on society. Emerging infectious diseases and bio-terrorism are fear provoking, Countries and there governments look at bioterror as a real threat and invest seriously in countering this threat.

An epidemic has a particular power to strike fear into the heart of the population specifically because it is invisible and has no clear bounds. An epidemic behaves as a flock that operates on simple rule - infects and replicate. The fact remains that we are going to have more waves of fear mongering in future.

1. How prepared are we architecturally to defend and deal with the demands that bio-terrorism might impose in the future?
The authors discuss the difference between smooth and striated space and how they relate to each other. They state that things are rarely either smooth or striated — that most things are in a constant process of becoming one or the other. The two types of spaces essentially exist in the state of synthesis “we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space”.

Smooth spaces are like that of the ocean or the desert; it appears as one continuous entity. Striated spaces on the other hand feel much more controlled and rigid, have limits, and focuses on points.

1. What is the real relationship between striated and smooth spaces?

The author discusses the notion of home and the theory of identity and know territory. He says that home may not be defined as a place alone, but a sense of home can be developed in any space by the practice of habits alone. He goes on to say that space needs to be personalized for it to feel like home. He gives an example of a child singing to himself in order to take control of his fear and provide comfort.

There is a connection between home and culture “one culture which differs from another based on how each culture assumes its territories”. Wise goes on to state that home is a process. He defines an architect as a person who can create space but it is the user who inhabits it and makes it home thus an architect in true sense of the term is not a home maker.

1. How different is space inhabitation from dwelling?