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Introduction

The research presented in this essay is concerned with the implications that a time and memory-related observation of urban spaces in transformation has on their understanding. The interpretation of urban structures through the lens of time has been focussed on by multiple scholars. My focus in this context will lie on the interpretation of a place as a multitude of material and non-material manifestations of past versions of it and therefore put stress on its relativity to its own relation to time. I will compare my observations to Aldo Rossi's book "The Architecture of the City" and deduct a critical position towards it with a focus on transformative processes in the city of Istanbul.

The definition of a place as a projection of its history, as well as a network of changing influences between material and non-material structures is relevant, because it extends the common understanding and meaning of a place. Especially in places of transformation, this enables a more

sensitive handling when designing or intervening. Simultaneously, no formal restriction of “style” is made, as it is not important for this view on the urban place.

Chapter One: Physical and Non-Physical Place



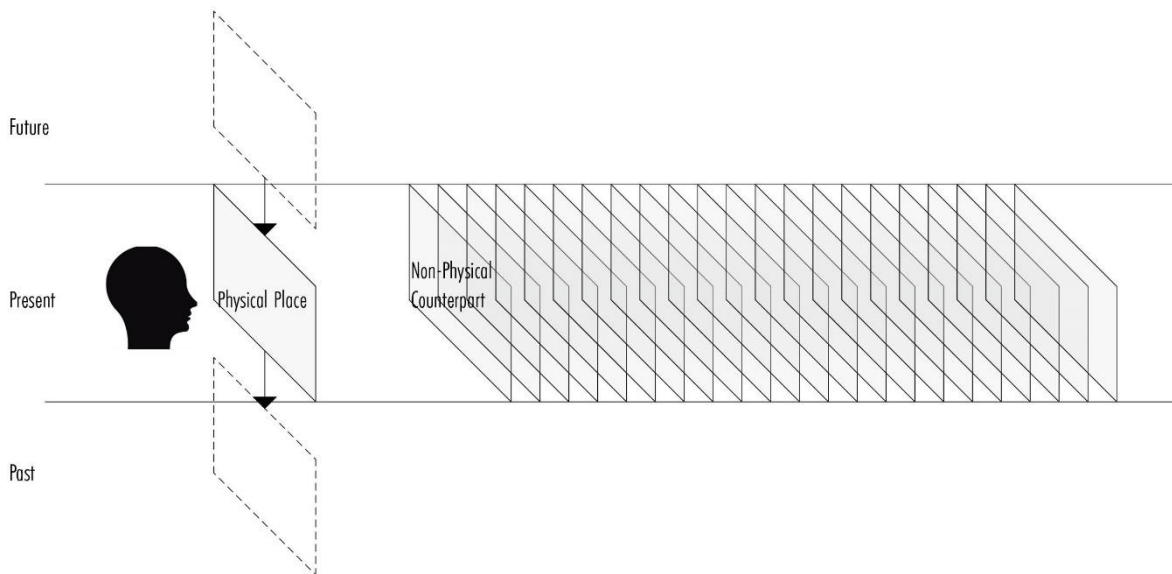
(Introduction Multitude of Places)

The sequence above shows a virtual walk through a neighbourhood in Istanbul through the camera of a Google Street View car. While progressing through the streets of the neighbourhood, the observer passes by various inhabited houses, parked cars, hanging laundry, trees that were planted in the front yard. The walker steps out of the street onto an intersection, turns around, and finds that the neighbourhood just experienced no longer exists. Only a few shrubs and remnants of houses give a hint of what the walker perceived just moments before.

The time jump, which was created by the photos of the Google car taken at different points in time, brings to light several concluding theses. I will first explain them in this chapter and develop a research question to test these theses. In the following chapters I will try to answer them with the help of literature on the topic, like Aldo Rossi's Theory "The Architecture of the City".

(Thesis one: Multitude of Places)

If one had not perceived this leap in time and had seen only the piles of rubble, one could guess that the place once looked different but could not form a concrete picture of what exactly it looked like. Having had the experience of being in the inhabited neighbourhood just moments before its vanishing, one notices that there is more to this place than the physical location that is visible in the present moment. The place, which existed some moments ago, remains just as present - even though it does not exist physically anymore. So, one seems to have made a mental copy of the perceived place at the time of the still existing neighbourhood. **While the physical place has changed**, i.e., the old state has disappeared, **the mental copy** - the non-physical place - **has been preserved**. It therefore surpasses time, unlike the physical place. Since the non-physical place no longer matches the current, i.e., physical place, a new, updated mental copy is created. Thus, over time, a multitude of non-physical places emerge parallel to the evolving physical place (in our example, the demolition of the neighbourhood) and project themselves into the present physical place.



(Thesis two: Non-physical and physical places can be material or immaterial; they can change or stay the same throughout time)

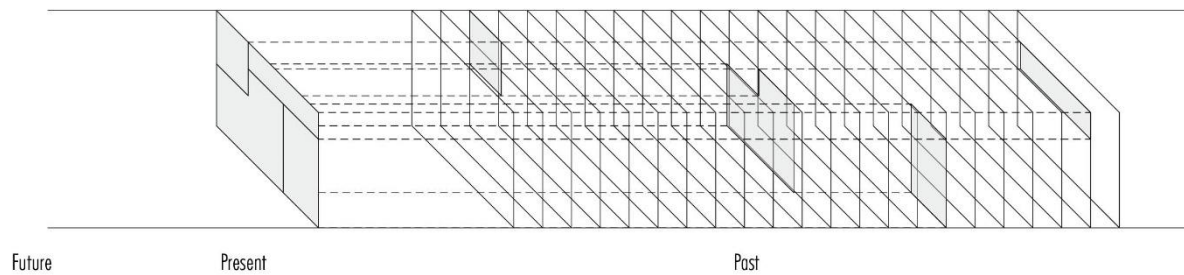
I assume, that projections of past places into the present can be of various kinds: material and non-material. An example is the Aachen Cathedral, a building where different parts stem from different times and are material remnants of certain eras. They can survive fully, or in altered ways. From these remnants, however, conclusions can also be drawn about certain non-material remnants projected from the past to the present and their alteration throughout time. Shifting social norms, for example, become apparent by observing the successively added parts of the building: the transformation from a central building to a longitudinal building had to do with the changing practice of Christian devotion. In the present day, the additions changed their meaning again, where they mainly take on the role of a symbol which roots the city of Aachen in history.

(Conclusion of previous paragraphs)

Concluding the previous two paragraphs, a place is defined by more than just its location and physical presence, namely by its variations over time, the present being just one of them. In the case of an urban place or architecture consisting of buildings or objects of different ages, parts of different non-physical places throughout time are projected into the present, physical place. These remnants can be material or non-material, and either stay the same or change throughout time.

(Memories are not easily measurable, physical parts are)

From the perspective of the inhabitant of a place, one can call the non-physical places memories of that inhabitant to the place. These memories are fully or partially kept in the present by this individual. However, memories usually vary from person to person and are shaped by a multitude of subjective influences. Therefore, while they extend the understanding of a place from a mere physical presence to the embodiment of the simultaneity of a variety of memories, they are not easily measurable or observable by an outsider. If the physical place is instead defined by its observable parts, so the parts that remained until the now, a more empirical way of understanding it as defined by the progression of time can be achieved. Non-physical places are therefore not verifiable anymore unless parts of them survived in the present place.



(Influence between Non-Material and Material define a place wholesomely)

This observation leads me to the conclusion, that neither the first, nor the second diagram can depict the urban place as a vessel of the past and present fully. While the first one lacks measurability, the second one limits the place to being physically entirely self-referential. The solution can lie in learning about how the immaterial and material sphere influence each other throughout time. This leads me to the research question:

Supposing that there are material and non-material remnants of a places past that surpass time and can be detected in the present materially and non-materially:

What are the mechanisms of their influence on each other?

For a future design: Can the experimental practice of altering a linear time progression be used as a tool to expand human perception to highlight emerging connections and separations between the material and immaterial?

Chapter Two: The Architecture of the City

(Example of Material/Non-material influence in Rossi)

To find case studies which answer the question, Aldo Rossi's "The Architecture of the City" can foster vocabulary which describes said material and non-material fragments more precisely.

Rossi summarizes the presence of past variants of a place in the present as "permanence", which he paraphrases as "the past that we experience today."¹ He does not limit it to the survival of a certain architectural monument, that is, the "visible sign of the past,"² but denominates street routes and the city map as intangible indications of permanence. Thus, while the architectural monument allows us to look directly into the past of the place, street routes and the city map are non-material indices about the past. Rossi makes a helpful distinction between "precondition" and "form" (taken from the German translation). While a precondition can be seen as the set of conditions at the time of the emergence of an urban phenomenon, form is merely the physical manifestation of that phenomenon, conditioned by the preconditions. It can be, that the form as well as its precondition surpass time and are still present, or merely the form.³ This distinction and influence between visible and non-visible, physical, and non-physical, tangible, and intangible, or material and non-material qualities of urban phenomena (for the sake of my focus I will use the respective word-pairs interchangeably) is made by Rossi several times throughout his theory.

Non-Material → Material

Mentioning the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua, for example, Rossi makes clear the inadequacy of viewing the building only in terms of its form, pointing out that its consideration and valuation as a monument lies in the immaterial values – qualities that it already had at the time of its construction – that carried on through to the present day. These values have to do with the building's role for the collective memory, with the image that people have of it, and with the relationship it establishes between the individual and the collective. The form (and its alterations) is a mere materialization of these values.⁴ Thus, he describes the process of an immaterial quality materializing itself.

To make conclusions about the immaterial qualities that manifest themselves in certain visible phenomena in the present (a building, a part of a building, a street network, etc.) its characterization as a sign in the sense of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory can be a useful method. If one considers the visible urban phenomenon an indexical sign, it means that it is read as a sign, whose appearance (the signifier) is a direct result of the immaterial qualities that shaped it (the signified).⁵ A fenced-off front yard, which can be seen around many of the self-constructed houses in the "Sahintepe" neighbourhood in Istanbul constitute an indexical sign which signifies the apparent value of many inhabitants that is safety. The immaterial, non measurable value of safety materializes itself through the emergence of the fence.

¹ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, ed. Paperback. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984).

² Ibid 30.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid 17.

⁵ Charles Sanders Peirce, *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic by Charles Sanders Peirce*. (University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Material → non-Material

In a similarly direct fashion, a material phenomenon creates, or – after its physical destruction – leaves behind an immaterial trace. In his urbanist theory “The image of the city”, Kevin Lynch formulates “Imageability”, a value he finds necessary to guide the future building of cities. It describes the ability of a physical object to “evoke a strong image in any given observer”.⁶ According to Lynch, the immaterial trace left behind by an object consists of multiple individual memories and subsequently larger collective images.

The Camlica Hill on the Asian side of Istanbul is historically known to be a park, on which wild cherry trees grew. It is depicted in many old paintings and photographs. After the construction of the Camlica Mosque and the adjoined feeder road, its meaning for the city changed from a green spot to a place of prayer and the power of the current government, among many others.

(Conclusion: Influence is Always Reciprocal)

The two previous paragraphs describe exemplary mechanisms of influences between material and non-material changes in an urban place and serve as an answer to the first two research questions. Their influence is reciprocal, and could be described as the following sequence:

physical place → creates image of the place → influences physical place → creates image

(Analysis of Non-Material Goes beyond the Architectural Analysis)

Part of this conclusion is that individual memories or images associated with a certain place are not as easy to observe, since their influence of the change of the place is more subtle. An ethnological analysis including studies of literature and other means of personal expression would be more appropriate. In some cases of urban change, names of streets or stores can be immaterial remnants of past physical phenomena as well.

Chapter Three: Redefining The Monument

(Materialisation of Non-Material: Monument.)

As mentioned before, Rossi describes the urban monument as the materialised bearer of immaterial qualities. However, the monuments themselves can only remain bearers of meaning over time if they are either physically altered (as in the case of Palazzo Ragona, where a change of functions restructured the building), or retain a defining spatial or memorial character for the city despite losing every function.

In cases of complete exchanges of urban structures as is the case with countless Neighbourhoods within Istanbul, an old structure is perceived as out of date because it no longer meets the housing demands that Istanbul presents; it is demolished and replaced with larger and denser structures. In this process, most visible as well as indirectly visible reference to the past is erased. There is no “permanence”, in Rossi’s terms. Because – as mentioned in chapter one – only the physical remains tell a place’s history, their full destruction creates a discrepancy between the physical place and the non-physical places that complete it. According to the deterministic implications of Rossi’s theory, this means that the neighbourhood was designed for “the permanence of a function that is now technically and socially outlived.”,⁷ rendering it a natural process for this neighbourhood to disappear.

⁶ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977).

⁷ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*. (Cambridge) 60.

(Critique: Cannot always judge importance of Urban Place according to success of survival, because this always gives power to the stronger force)

Here I see an inadequacy in the determinism found in Rossi's theory of permanence to take on a critical position towards an introduced extreme urban change: While older neighbourhoods no longer represent the larger dynamic of densification of Istanbul, they do have certain inherent immaterial qualities which materialise. There are countless examples of this, but I would like to focus on the one that I analysed:

(Argument: Kerazlitepe is a Monument because it is manifested community)

The so-called "Kirazlitepe Urban Transformation, Reconstruction and Beautification Association" is a neighbourhood association founded by members of the Kerazlitepe neighbourhood, which lies on the previously mentioned Camlica Hill. Its inhabitants were subject to the forceful eviction of the entire neighbourhood to make place for a new dwelling on the same spot. They created a registered group, which brought the whole neighbourhood together to empower themselves against a chaos of legislation, paired with dishonest communication strategies and gagging contracts which aimed at the cheap removal of people from the place. The case can be made, that the neighbourhood had qualities of a monument in Rossi's sense: The immaterial quality of a strong sense of cohesion and a collective identity were created by, but also created themselves the organically grown physical elements of the neighbourhood consisting of spontaneously negotiated plot conditions between neighbours, creation of shops, cafes and mosques, flexible plinth areas, walkable streets and so on.

(Argument: New Structures are too planned, policy-wise disregard Non-Material Qualities of Resilience)

It is no question that the housing developments that are put into place after the destruction of the old neighbourhood disregard most of those qualities. While Rossi's definition of the main quality of a monument being its power to find use throughout time I agree with, forces of a few in power should not be seen as destiny, rendering the elevation of a place to a monument completely dependent on these few in power. The importance attached to an urban place comes from its inhabitants. Its fate should therefore be the decision of its inhabitants,

With regards to the initial observation that an urban place is made up of its present state as well as its past states, and to the further elaboration of how these states are influenced by and influence immaterial qualities and values of a place, I want to re-evaluate sites of complete urban restructuring through various stages of their transformation (including the new structures as well as the old ones). An increased importance is therefore put on site-specific values and characteristics which would define them as a monument in Rossi's terms. I want to use knowledge deducted from Rossi's theory to challenge its focus on the big picture over the small units, the city over its parts, its focus on the construction as opposed to the destruction, as well as their deterministic characterisation of urban qualities as those that outlast time, without questioning the dependence on this outlasting of time on the subjective evaluation that is done by those in power.

Conclusion

Aldo Rossi's Theory of Permanency, and the monument enabled me to position myself to the theories' ability to not only describe the city from the perspective of time, but also its ability to enable a critical position towards the different transformation processes a city undergoes. I have concluded that the city, the urban place, and subsequently also the architectural object, are not adequately considered with regards to their impact on the city and its collective cognition if they are only analysed according to their physical presence. I shifted Rossi's focus on the physical monument as a carrier of immaterial qualities and instead propose a focus on an underlying set of qualities out of which a form can arise. This way I hope to propose transformations of places with a stronger focus on local characteristics and qualities for the city worth keeping.