PLANNED VS LIVED:

Interconnected themes pertinent to the
issue of Formal vs Informal Space

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"We identify ourselves with this space, this place, this moment, and these dimensions become ingredients of our very existence. Architecture is the art of reconciliation between ourselves and the world, and this mediation takes place through the senses."
(Aamodt, 2017)

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Mexico City Office Blocks

Statement of Own Work

This study was completed as part of the BA (Hons) Interior Architecture at the University of the West of England. The work is my own. Where the work of others is used or drawn on, it is attributed to the relevant source.

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Istanbul Office Blocks

Istanbul Night Bazzar

Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the dynamic tensions between typologies of space and the problems associated with the different types. The approach is interdisciplinary in orientation, drawing on the works of a number of theorists in the fields of architecture, sociology, anthropology and phenomenology, including Rem Koolhaas, Henri Lefebvre, George Simmel and Rahul Mehrota. Formal and informal spaces, especially in the context of urban living, can be conceptualised as two opposites of a spectrum. These are examined not so much in terms of "pure" architectural qualities but in terms of broad societal processes that shape in different ways the way city dwellers live in and experience the built environment, the ways they interact with it and, as importantly, the ways they interact amongst themselves. Selective examples of building projects/initiatives in different countries are provided to highlight key issues in the debate of formal versus informal spaces as well as illustrate theoretical and practical attempts to reconcile the two. In particular, photographs from my time abroad in Turkey, Mexico & South-East Asia further demonstrate the types of space described in this essay. No attempt has been made to suggest a grand synthesis or provide a definitive answer to the "provocative" and challenging question "Could things be any worse if there was no planning at all?" The main concern has been to try to capture something of the complexities and nuances of the debate, in an attempt to present a landscape of tensions which is still live and evolving.

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Mexico City International Style Buildings

Introduction

This dissertation aims to explore the dynamic tensions between typologies of space and their position on the scale of formality; focusing on human-spatial interaction and the quality of informal space compared with ever emerging formal spaces. The recurring theme in this text is the importance of the intangible content of architecture and the built environment, and the role played by the quality of said spaces in human experience. Dutch architect, theorist and urbanist Rem Koolhaas (2001) observed, "When we think about space, we have only looked at its containers. As if space itself is invisible, all theory for the production of space is based on an obsessive preoccupation with its opposite: substance and objects, i.e. architecture." Koolhaas believes atmospheric qualities of space are ignored in the traditional architectural design process. In my view this is particularly true of modern urban architecture; my aim is to reverse this traditional image to obtain a better understanding of the immaterial substance that fills architecture.

"When we think about space, we have only looked at its containers. As if space itself is invisible,"

My work is informed by key influences in the multidisciplinary fields of architecture, sociology, anthropology and phenomenology, and draws on references to the works of Rem Koolhaas, Henri Lefebvre, George Simmel & Rahul Mehrota, amongst others.

Left: The city is a maze of homogenous blocks of flats: Thessaloniki, Greece. Right: Open market and free space in Diyarbakir, Turkey.
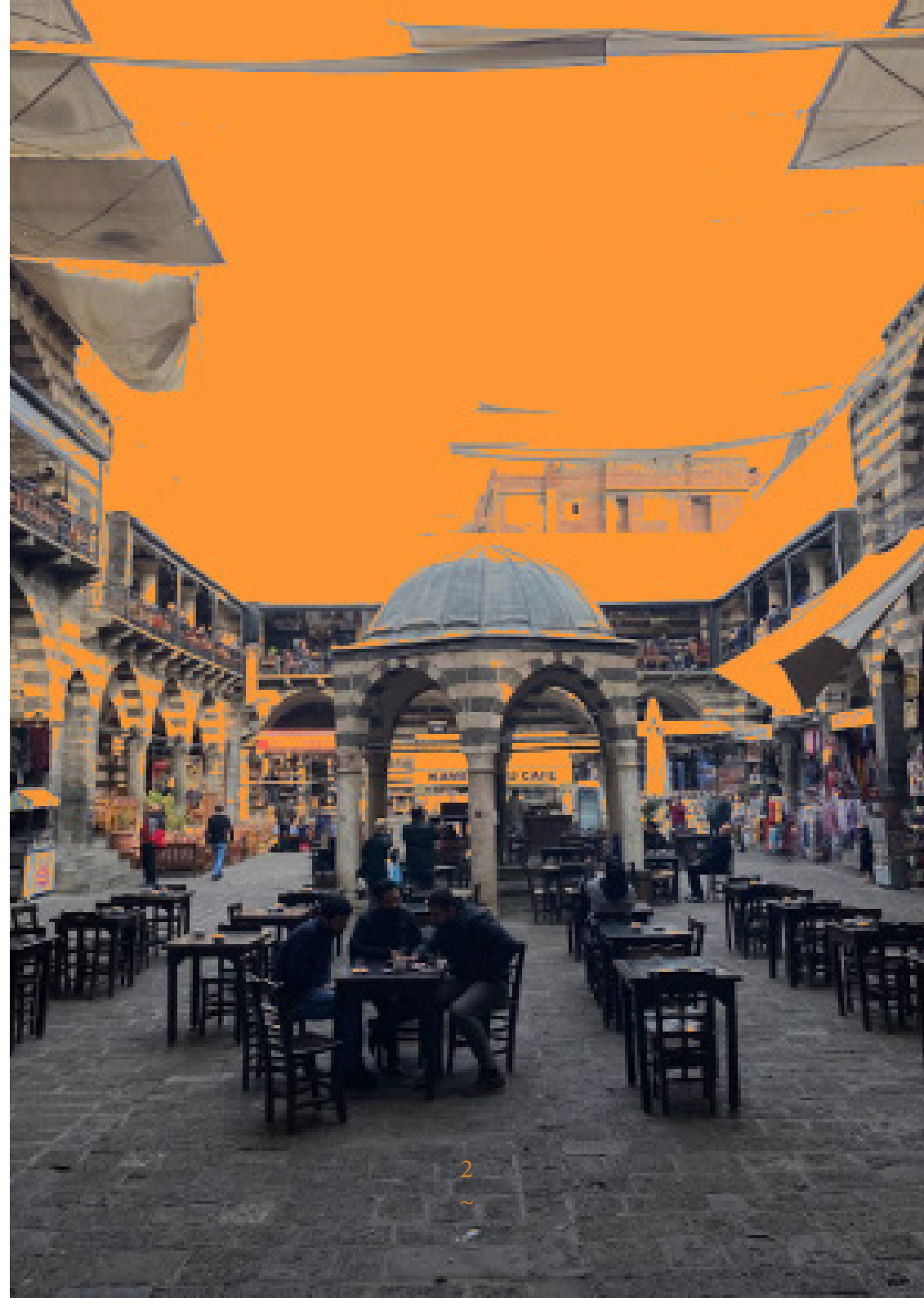
1. The Formal Space

Formal space is necessarily purposefully planned. It is conceptualised in the abstract realm and translated into reality in the form of social norms, rules and construction of tangible architectures through official processes.

1.1 Emergence ~

Globalisation has arguably resulted in spatial interaction being excluded, or obliterated entirely, from most forms of space. For example, "selfie museums" such as the Museum of Ice Cream chain, are designed purely for visitors to engage via digital means with a priority of curating the best snapshot for social media, as opposed to being present in the space. Held et al (1999), describe globalisation as "the speeding up in world-wide connectedness in all aspects of social life." The fast-paced technological advances since the Industrial Revolution have stitched together distances and increased access to geographical locations, cultures, ideas, politics and economies, markets, histories and design styles. Social media is a principal driver of this increased and instant connectivity, with some architects and designers creating spaces for the purpose of aesthetics and how the environment will be exhibited online across the world, instead of its actual, lived experience.

In my view, there are two decisive phases in which globalisation strongly influenced architecture and urbanism. The first was rural to urban migration in response to industrialisation and the rise of capitalism and consumerism, for which cities were the hub. This mass migration to the city necessitated rapid urban development and use of resources and energy. In fact, the majority of energy under control of humans post 19th century has been devoted to construction and maintenance of our urban habitats (Gülöksüz, 2022). This shift to city life compelled urban dwellers to adopt what George Simmel dubbed an "intellectualistic character" to city life. In The Metropolis and Mental Life (1950),

Simmel focuses on development of the individual to 'cope' with living in a metropolis, compared with rural small town living that had preceded the global shift in industrialisation. Simmel explains how modern life and urban environments reduce human interaction with and within our vast, anonymous and homogenous cities.

The city is an amalgamation of diverse peoples, cultures, events and actions and as a result, it is full of intense, ever changing stimuli and contrast. The constant stimuli in the metropolis creates powerful psychological conditions that require mental energy to consume and process. Consequently, humans have adapted what Simmel calls the "intellectualistic character" of city mental life: a blasé attitude, a 'thick skin' and indifference to their surroundings. He suggests that city dwellers adopt a more rationalistic character compared to their small town cousins in order to emotionally deal (or not have to deal) with the contrasts of the city. Simmel also links this to cities being the economic centre of society, and the increasing formality and objectivity of life in terms of monetary value and consumerism. In order to retain mental health and enable participation in society, city inhabitants begin to see everything as grey, as a value, with no discernible differences, including relationships and inner consciousness as well as tangible objects.

The city dweller ceases to engage with their environment, either because subconsciously shutting down sensitivity to the overwhelming array of stimuli in the city protects their mental wellbeing, as Simmel suggests, or because city life has become so predictable, copy-paste humans living the same coercively routine life in identical urban environments, that one can exist on autopilot. In my view, this structured way of life, existing within the built environment, is a form of formality; it is related to architecture due to the coercion to exist and behave in a certain way placed upon us by physical structures, societal structures and abstract planning models.

The second central influence of globalisation can be observed worldwide in our apparently homogenised and modernised global cities. The effects of connectivity, world context and shared ideologies through globalisation seeped into the practice of architecture and spatial organisation and birthed what has been described as the International Style. Closely related to Modernism, the International Style developed in the 1920s-1930s and was characterised by the use of mass produced, lightweight materials, modular forms, flat surfaces, an abundance of glass and a purposeful rejection of colour and ornamentation (Campbell, Unknown). On a smaller, more artisanal scale, examples of international architecture include the Bauhaus building in Dasseau by Walter Gropius and Villa Savoy by Le Corbusier.
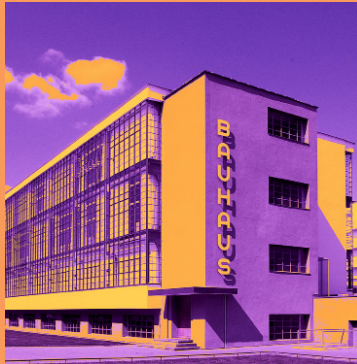
Above: Fig. 2. Walter Gropius' Bauhaus building in Desseau for the Bauhaus school of architecture. International Style's hallmark materials of concrete and steel are immediately visible in the facade. Top left: Fig. 3. Interior View.

Above: Fig. 4. Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye in Poissy, outside of Paris. The domestic villa was built using reinforced concrete. Right: Fig. 5. Interior view: a window frames a view to the villas modular forms, flat surfaces and clean lines.

Like all architectural styles, Internationalism had a field of influence. Most of the architects defined by this style were European, with a significant German influence emerging from the Bauhaus, namely Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe. Other Europeans included France's Le Corbusier, Italy's Luigi Figini and Finland's Alvar Aalto (Tate Modern, unknown). The style was soon translated to an international urban scale. The post industrial predominance of steel and glass as building materials following the second world war, and a developing preoccupation with simplistic cubic forms, transformed city skylines into an urban jungle of verticality, mass, gridded glass and steel. Many cities across the globe look the same, hosting replicated

Globalisation, instead of being a platform for joyous exchange instead flattens places, identities and cultures into indistinguishable spaces.

urban corporate environments resulting from shared global ideologies of capitalism and consumerism. The cycle of extensive, blanket urban planning and design for the needs and wants of the most influential in turn promotes the homogenising discourse of globalisation. Globalisation, instead of being a platform for joyous

An over subscription to one style, in this case the International Style, encourages alienation and detachment from buildings and environment.

exchange instead flattens places, identities and cultures into indistinguishable spaces. The new corporate world forces places that could encourage difference and interaction into rigid, ordered plans for design and living. An over subscription to one style, in this case the International Style, encourages alienation and detachment from buildings and environment. This links back to Simmel's theory of the urban dwellers' intellectualistic character and loss of possibility or motivation for interaction beyond

one's   day   to   day   mundane   routine.

Fig. 6. Istanbul

Fig. 7. London

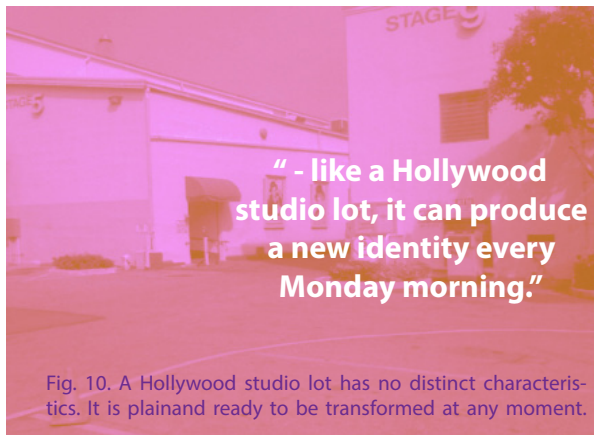Fig. 8. Mexico City

Fig. 9. Toronto

Four skylines from cities across the globe, the vertical typology is uncanny.

Ho Chi Minh International Style Skyscrapers

1.2 Genericism & Interiority

Dialogue between people and their environment is lost as spaces become standardised and interiorised, irrespective of culture or location. One of the tensions between indistinguishable spaces, and dislocation, is that everything becomes generic to the extreme.

Koolhaas explored the cause and effects of urban genericism in The Generic City (1995): "A city is a plane inhabited in the most efficient way by people and processes", suggesting that the city's use is dictated by those who inhabit it. In my view, the generic city is highly formal because of the intense planning of space catering to western ideals of efficiency and consumerism. Arguably, if a space evolves in response to what is popular then it is democratic and a natural progression.

A generic city, without deep ties to culture, history and identity, can change on a whim; potentially this can be a benefit, as Koolhaas opined, "in most cases, the presence of history only drags down its performance (...) The Generic is nothing but a reflection of present need and present ability. (broken free from the straitjacket of identity). It is big enough for everybody. It is easy. It does not need maintenance. If it gets too small it just expands. If it gets too old it just self destructs and renews. It is equally exciting - or unexciting - everywhere. It is superficial - like a Hollywood studio lot, it can produce a new identity every Monday morning." (Koolhaas, 1995).

" - like a Hollywood studio lot, it can produce a new identity every Monday morning."

Fig. 10. A Hollywood studio lot has no distinct characteristics. It is plainand ready to be transformed at any moment.

Koolhaas' view that city use is dictated by people is too simplistic. The concept of democratic evolution of space is unbalanced by the power of 'corporate', which influences change and imposes rigidity in the city, regardless of individual or community wishes. This model excludes the opportunity for small scale pockets of interaction and engagement whereby people can take back authorship in creating atmospheres, if not physical spaces, in which they would truly wish to reside in. People do not generally dictate the use of the city for the simple reason that they lack the power, the means or the resources to do so. Power, means, resources and knowledge are unevenly distributed; those with institutional, financial and political power are more likely to prescribe 'how to use the city' in their favour.

"instead of design, there is calculation",

Places are detached from their context; the formality of the prefab city and society has lost touch with its contextual location and residents are not involved in the organic development of the space with culture and history not integrated into the bricks and mortar. The atmosphere is lacking. The gaps between the buildings are empty. How can people inhabiting the space interact with their environment beyond surface level when the opportunity for it is restricted? I describe the modern city as a Planned and Purposeful Formal Space. A space that has developed via formal processes of design and planning in order to structure the environment, accompanied by direction on how the residents may interact and behave within the territory. In his essay Junkspace (2001), Koolhaas asserts that, "instead of design, there is calculation", and that the output of the built environment sector in current, capitalist times has no regard for humanist design. The plans are created in an abstract context, with efficiency and order as the driving force behind the design. Plans are translated into reality with the expectation that the inhabitants will adhere to the strict template, without considering the preferences of residents.

1.3 Conceived Formality

Formal space also aligns with Mental Space, a term coined by sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre, in The Production of Space (1991). He describes Mental Space as " the abstract, logico-mathematical space (...) Space that is conceived and planned by humans and can exist in the visible and invisible world" (1991, pp.). This 'invisible' space is the result of policies and rules within the built environment that dictate how we may use or move through space, in order to conform to norms or avoid reprimand. Lefebvre also describes mental space as Conceived Space: "a place for the practices of social and political power; in essence, it is these spaces that are designed to manipulate those who exist within them" (Lefebvre, 1991, pp.222). This supports the notion of relationships of power in space by those who are involved in the planning process imposing it upon those who inhabit the space. Lefebvre says "It is a people-less space, conceptualised without life", (Lefebvre, 1991).

It appears counterintuitive to purposefully design such an environment, considering life takes place in every space, and spaces are created through the lives lived within them. Formal conceived space is so rigorously planned and implemented from the outside that there is no 'free space' in which there can be organic growth for social and real needs to be met. It is not necessarily the fault of architecture, but as previously discussed, financial and political agendas and influences are dislocated from the need for humanistic approach to design.

Ho Chi Minh Office Blocks

2. The Informal Space

At the other end of the spectrum is informal space. Whereas formal space is legal, planned, official, rule abiding and solid, informal space can be considered any of its opposites. The use and function of informal space is rarely planned or prescribed, but rather emerges on an ad hoc basis by its users.

As the scale of formality features tangible formal architecture, such as the literal buildings we inhabit, there are also intangible formalities at play, for example the unspoken rule that we do not run or raise our voices indoors, or that one does not eat in the bathroom or sleep in the kitchen, informal architecture also presents itself as a range of mediums, from vast, lawlessly built and inhabited shanty towns, to the idea of culture in a place and down to the curiously strong understanding of the atmosphere that makes a house a 'home'.

Moment of directive-free use of 'leftover' space in Galle, Sri Lanka

2.1 Social Spaces

Parallel to his concept of Mental Space, Lefebvre also introduces the Social Space: "the space of social practice, of its inhabitants and users, experienced through all of the senses. It is socially constructed by layers of social events" (1991). Also called Lived Space, or Real Space: ultimately it is the space in which we all live. In contrast to the Conceived Space of planners which exists in theories, powers and architectural representations of space, it is the physical ground we root ourselves on. It is the road we jog across, the flowers we pick, the park benches that support the heartbroken teenager or the egg and cress sandwich eating

"it is the space in which we all live"

of another on their lunch break, the walls that enclose our activities of home, work and leisure life. In this informal space, symbolic value is given to a place by its inhabitants (Lefebvre, 1991).

Lefebvre's 'Social Space' is synonymous with Place, because it is based on atmosphere and created through human relation. Jacobs (1993) details the idea of a Place as not the space defined by designers and architects, but the place of experiences and livability.

Informal Architecture: Wet Market in Mekong Delta region, Vietnam

2.2 Making of Place, Atmosphere & Genius Loci

The Latin phrase Genius Loci means 'the spirit of place'. In Roman mythology, the 'genius loci' was the guarding spirit that created the ethereal atmospheric sense of a place. It is entirely indefinable, understood only at an intuitive level (Sparvell, 2017). Today, this could be interpreted as the vibe or atmosphere of a space, all of the conscious and subconscious elements that are gleaned from an environment, leading us to describe it as 'cosy', 'austere' or 'hip'.

While these characteristics can develop organically in a space, they can also be purposefully integrated into the design process. For example, the choice of materials echo certain connotations: a pine interior conveys warmth, a glass facade represents airiness and modernity.

Fig. 11. Extreme Informal Architecture, Medina Souk / Market in Marrakech

2.3 Extreme Informality in Architecture

Extreme informality may not be recognised as architecture. Examples include slums, favelas and shanty towns: all extreme domestic conditions of the informal. Kibera, a slum on the outskirts of Nairobi in Kenya, is inhabited by some 2.5 million people who reside in shacks made of informal scrap materials such as mud and corrugated tin, (Bloxham, 2020). Such areas are typically non regulated living conditions, with minimal or no access to standard infrastructure and societal tensions such as unemployment, high crime rates and addiction.

Another example of established informal architecture is non-domestic markets. A market can be seen as vernacular architecture, resulting from collective knowledge inherited and passed on. It is specific to its locality, and in stark contrast to globalised urban spaces, embraces traditional construction that adapts to the region's people, culture and environment. A high profile illustration of this is the UNESCO world heritage protected site, Medina Souk (ICH UNESCO, Unknown) in Marrakesh. It is an immaterial architecture due to its temporality, constructed at dawn every morning and packed away by night.

Fig. 12. Medina Souk / Market in Marrakech. It is the space of the market even when the market itself is missing.

**"Could things be any worse
if there was no planning at all?"
(Barker, 1999)**

Extreme Informal Architecture & Temporality: Night Bazaar
in Istanbul that takes place in a carpark. It starts at midnight
and is packed away by the morning for use again by cars.

3. Neither Formal nor Informal?

Formal space is a prescribed aesthetic which is disempowering for the layperson. Where should the authorship of built environment products lie? Without the participation of those inhabiting the space, globalised urban space is efficient, soulless and creates disparity between environment and person. In contrast, informal space is created by layers of lived experience and does not necessarily lead to tangible infrastructure in which we can reside. Atmosphere and belonging are important for positive engagement with our surroundings, but people still need shelter and infrastructure in which to live. Barker posed the question in his published essay Non Plan: An Experiment in Freedom (1999), "Could things be any worse if there was no planning at all? They might even be somewhat better." I will examine this through three examples.

3.1 Designed Informality

Architectural firm Elemental, led by architect and founder Alejandro Aravena, sought to tackle the Chilean housing crisis through what has been dubbed 'open source architecture'; the removal of certain roles of designers and builders in the process of constructing domestic housing (Overstreet, 2022), and the introduction of Do It Yourself for future dwellers. The concept of what became known as the Half a House project, was the purpose-

> **"Domestic units with structural and atmospheric voids that would be filled by inhabitants"**

ful design of domestic units with structural and atmospheric voids that would be filled by inhabitants. "Elemental decided to spend the money on what they called "half a good house", rather than a whole bad house, which meant providing a structure with the basics of plumbing and shelter, which residents could then expand using their own labour and skill. As they had been living illegally on the site for 30 years, putting up their own informal dwellings, it was something they knew how to do," (Moore, 2016).

Fig. 13. Half a House Project

The formal design process produces an output that serves as a kind of template upon which informal and personal processes can take over. A vital aspect of involving the community in the construction of where they will reside is that their culture, history and feeling will be solidified in both the concrete structures and the atmosphere of the place. "You live in places and that's a fact. Someone has to give form to those places. And a mediocre environment can be as deadly as not facing basic human needs," (Moore, 2016). Aravena champions the importance of atmosphere and concept of social space in our environments, as it creates layers and moments for people to interact with and relate to, ultimately engaging with their environment on all levels.

This is the merging of formal and informal architecture; planned informality - the perfect oxymoron. The locals had participated in curating informal architecture for decades, so instead of top-down, 'it's for your own good' intervention, Aravena did not attempt to challenge their systems, but rather to normalise the status quo and elevate living standards in a human centred way. By facilitating the local community's participation in the planning of the new social housing project (Yutaka, 2020), he ensured that the design process remained relevant to specific community needs. The project successfully captured sustainable community engagement, noted by Moore via Aravena (2016) that "The people living in these social housing projects have stated that they were proud of their strong sense of community and improved standard of living". The work of Aravena and Elemental is crucial for humanitarian architecture, battling the global housing crisis and social responsibilities of architecture. In addition, it exposed how community engagement with design processes, built upon existing community foundations, enforces positive social and spatial qualities, and hopefully longevity as a result of more accurately informed design.

> **"A mediocre envionment can be as deadly as not facing basic human needs"**

Fig. 14. 'Formal' construction stage complete, the houses are ready to be inhabited and become homes.

Fig. 15. Aerial view of the Half a House project: creating a neighbourhood.

Fig. 16. Inhabited homes: collage-like in their appearance as each has been personalised by its inhabitants.

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Fig. 17. Family outside their finsihed home

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Fig. 18. Collage-like facade of finished Half A House

Fig. 19. Treacherous crossings in Torre David

3.2 Appropriated Architecture

Torre David is a 45 storey high tower block that looms over the Venezuelan capital of Caracas. The office tower, originally known as Centro Financiero Confinanzas, was designed by Venezuelan architect Enrique Gomez. The construction of the office block was nearing completion before the death of project developer Alfredo Brillembourg in 1993, but was abandoned during the collapse of the Venezuelan economy in 1994.

The building sprung to life with other ideas. Between 2007 and 2014, it became the improvised home to more than 750 families living in an unregulated, developed squat that came to be known as a vertical slum(Brillembourg, 2012). Locals requiring shelter, and a grounded community, took residence in the abandoned tower block and appropriated the architecture to suit their needs. Over the years, residents developed the space into a complex of housing, salons, shops, schooling, gyms, places of worship, as well as creating a governing body with many layers that would oversee maintenance, cleaning, and distribution of water and electricity supplies. In the absence of any formal infrastructure, the residents organised themselves to meet their own needs, all in one place, and curated an environment very similar to the concept of Le Corbusier's Unite D'habitacion in Marseille.

Fig. 20. Torre David
The 'Vertical Slum' of Venezuela, an office block inhabited by 750 families who repurposed it to faciliate domestic living, shops, education, social spaces and more.

Fig. 21. Unite d'habitacion
Mode of housing deisgned by Le Corbusier merging the individual and the collective.

Fig. 23. Resident and worker at Torre David, woman peering out of her shop window

Fig. 24. Youths creating social spaces out of the empty architecture in Torre David

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Fig. 22. Torre David

Formal architecture built something for which there was no demand at the time, and informal architecture possessed and repurposed it to meet local need. While in theory it sounds idyllic, the dangers of such extreme informality cannot be ignored. The residents of Torre David still lived in poverty, and did not have access to proper sanitation, infrastructures, privacy or basic health and safety. Brillembourg (2012) details the conditions of the tower, "many floors remain open to the outside (...) and glass panels of the facade have been removed to increase air circulation, leaving gaping holes to the outside", some 40 storeys high. This danger is compounded with unexpected holes in the floor, stairs without handrails and empty, open elevator shafts. Of course, some residents attempted to implement safety measures, such as "erecting short brick balcony walls" (Brillembourg & Klumper, 2013), however the possibility of fatal falls living in such a hazardous environment calls for constant vigilance. Clearly this is a failure, and limits the possibility of Torre David becoming a successful space.

These case studies demonstrate that architects cannot denounce all responsibility for planning, in a crazed, romanticised informal infatuation. Communities and individuals can and will curate their own environments over time, however trained and knowledgeable professionals must provide basic frameworks and infrastructures that satisfy human needs. Furthermore, architects who have spent years in education and practice honing their conceptual and design skills should take the opportunity to design for social challenge and reignite interaction, and perhaps some affection, between people and their surroundings. To achieve this, perhaps an ethic of co-responsibility could be embraced. Practically, this requires prospective inhabitants / users of the spaces to be involved in the concept, design and potentially building process, requiring a shift from a paradigm of expertise / technical knowledge-based architecture to one of user involvement, as illustrated
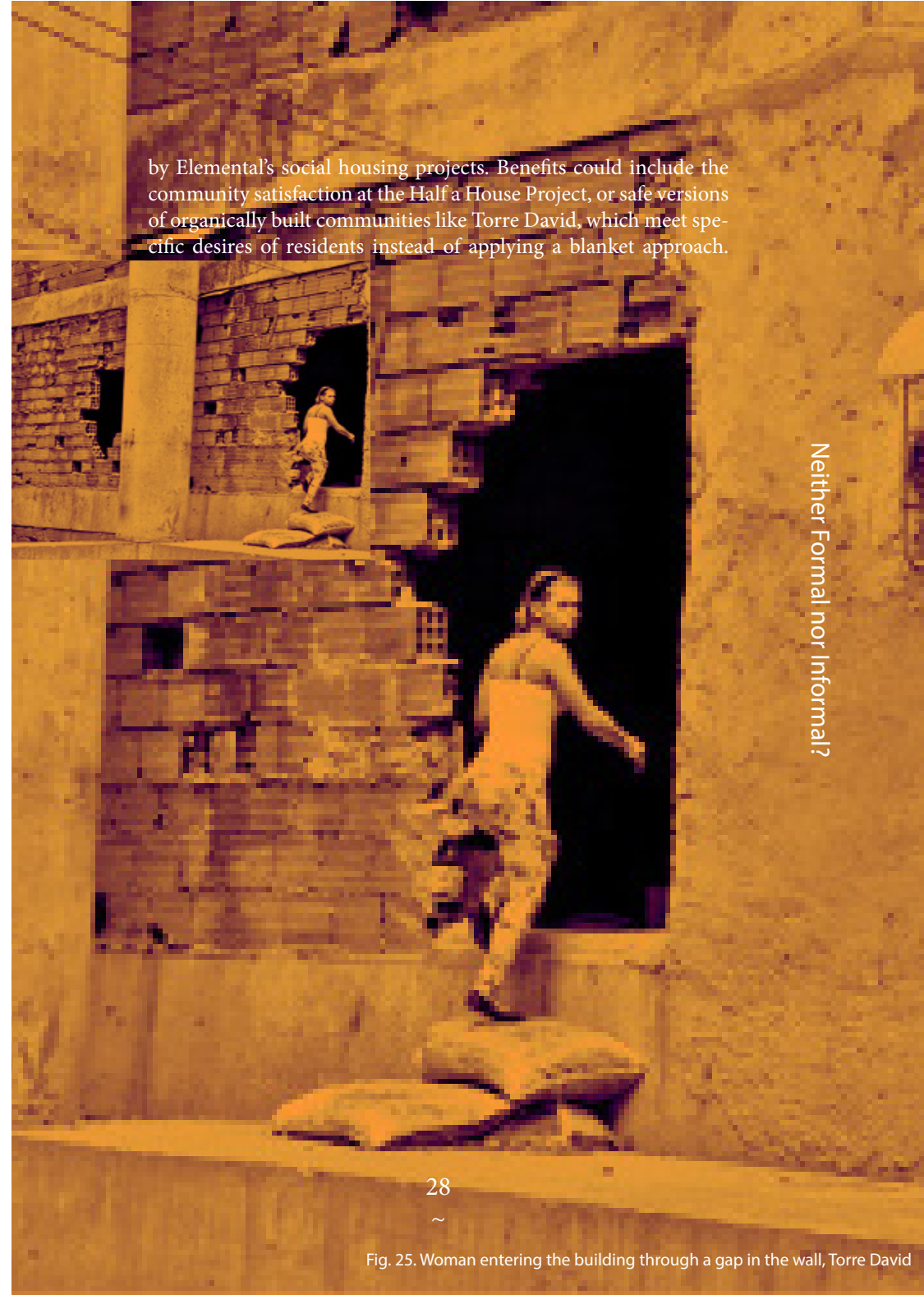
by Elemental's social housing projects. Benefits could include the community satisfaction at the Half a House Project, or safe versions of organically built communities like Torre David, which meet specific desires of residents instead of applying a blanket approach.

Fig. 25. Woman entering the building through a gap in the wall, Torre David

3.3 Somewhere in the Middle: Junkspace

In 2001, Koolhaas identified a new typology of space, Junkspace. Junkspace falls under the umbrella of formal architecture, perhaps in the shadows of mental space and lends itself to informality and social spaces upon its discovery. Koolhaas introduced the term in his essay Junkspace (2001), providing an anecdotal account of what Junkspace might be. Koolhaas struggles to define it, providing examples but no clarifying definition.

From the text, I perceived Junkspace to be the constant and over saturated design, in every conceivable space.

"continuous interior placeless landscape"

Planned space infiltrating every nook and cranny, so our environment becomes one "continuous interior placeless landscape" (Koolhaas, 2001) so that the designed space becomes utterly meaningless. It includes "throw away architecture" (Koolhaas, 2001) and temporary 'stuff', not made to last, due to the tendency to throw it up and tear it down on the whim of the economy, trends and social demand, much like Koolhaas' concept of the Generic City.

If every moment of our lives takes place in similarly designed spaces, we can become disorientated, or numb to changing processes. Koolhaas (2001) remarks that "Junkspace is post-existential; it makes you uncertain where you are, obscures where you go, undoes where you were. Who do you think you are? Who do you want to be?". This chimes with Simmel's theory of the intellectualistic character of city dwellers who are disconnected from the context of their space and place.

Junkspace is planned, placed, and formal. However, its incessant spread leaves the once new construction in the dust as it moves onto the next thing. This is where the informality creeps in: social transformation by those on the ground dominates these shells and puts them to use as canvases for creative outlet and real social need.   "Its anarchy is one of the last tangible ways in which we experience freedom" (Koolhaas, 2001).

Fig. 26. Junkspace: the pouring of concrete over every empty surface in order to call it Designed and Architecture?

Fig. 27. Malls, the ultimate Samespace, Junkspace, Waste of space...

4. Taking The Reigns From Formality

Can the two typologies of space, Formal and Informal, be reconciled; and if so to what extent can architects and urban planners influence such change?

It is essential to identify what spurred engagement in successful projects such as Half a House, and the original engagement in Torre David. With the starting point appearing to be the opportunity of physical space which is developed through appropriate design and resources, features lacking in Torre David.

An architect can't provide a blank canvas, their job is to design. They can create a space that allows intuitive use, without directing it: if an architect plans an intuitive space then it is not intuitive. Planned intuitive space, even with the best intentions, is still directive. The creation of lack of space or something generic seems the best for appropriation and involvement when sufficient tools are provided. This suggests that reconciliation of the scale of formality in architecture and renewed interaction with our environments, could be obtained by appropriating junkspace - in its existing form as an available 'byproduct' of the current system.

Rahul Mehrota, architect and urbanist, describes the compromise as the Kinetic City: one of transitionary landscapes, highlighting the importance of temporal dimension and the ephemeral. Mehrota's urban work and thinking is based on the conditions in Mumbai and other bustling Indian cities. He champions temporality in urban planning, flexibility of structures and systems that can keep up with the flux of people, trends, chaos and changes in urban environments. In an interview with Rigby at urbanNext (2016), Mehrota outlines that in globalised and industrialising India, there is insufficient time to plan ahead: the country's cities are in emergency mode.

"Designing with an expiration date eliminates dissapointment"

"Temporary means you can make transitions without locking yourself into one solution" (Mehrota, 2016). In my view, the beauty of temporality is that when it comes to an end, it isn't classed as a failure, or unsuccessful, because it wasn't built with the end game in mind, unlike traditional, static architecture which is used as a means to plan and shape urban environments. Designing with an expiration date eliminates disappointment, as it is planned or expected, and this 'end' can be incorporated and planned for into the design process with consideration of how it will be dismantled or reused. This connects to Koolhaas' theory of Junkspace, which provides neutrality, in its inherent genericism, to be appropriated and allows for flexibility and intuitive use of space. As a result of fast growth and changing trends, spaces initially designed for one purpose are 'ditched', engagement falls, its relevance redundant. This phenomenon could be incorporated into the urban cycle and structures reused or intentionally demolished without stubborn reference to the past. Mehrota (2008) states, "we must move our attention from just creating anew to also re-

"Junkspace (...) provides neutrality, in its inherent genericism, to be appropriated and allows for flexibility and intuitive use of space."

pair, restoration, reuse, by positioning ourselves as transformative agents early on and to look at recycling with greater dignity-" Mehrota reconsiders the formal and informal aspects of architecture by linking concepts of tangible vs intangible, mental vs social space, and the official vs unregulated. "From an ecological perspective, means [designers] are being mindful of the embodied energy in buildings, and from a sociological perspective, are looking at architecture as [part of] the rubric of communities and systems," (Mehrota, 2008).

Conclusion

I believe we should welcome architectural temporality into our society and cities; this involves recognition that the temporary is an integral part of urban design and subsequently should be incorporated into the formal design process. As Mehrota observes, urban design must allow for kineticism: flexibility with change and organic growth and shrinking of culture, community, movement and needs.

To extend beyond an ineffective compromise of blurring the binaries of formal and informal, further architectural reimagining is required, including raising interaction. Through my exploration of the dynamic tensions between typologies of space and their position on the scale of formality, I have come to the opinion that punctuation is required in the city to force people to pause and to engage, should they choose to do so. Gaps already exist in the city in the form of Junkspace: to avoid the championing of extremes, I would propose appropriation of such existing spaces that are byproducts of the system. They can be utilised with relative ease and official government intervention or city planning may not be needed. Consequently, this would offer more opportunities for human-spatial interaction in an urban context in what are, hopefully, high quality informal spaces amongst the formal ones.

It is the simultaneous validity of the formal and informal that is important. Both permanence and impermanence are required. "City is an armature for life," (Mehrota, 2016) and it binds people together, so we must leave space that can really be occupied by life. I agree with Mehrota's view that formal and informal order can be considered legitimate ways of "making the city" (Mehrota, 2016). Ideally, loosening of rigidity and encouragement of spontaneity will facilitate a city that starts to design its own urban plan, ever morphing into relevant spaces. Within this shifting urban fabric, opportunities for engagement will exist, perhaps via considered formal design or informal developments,

and provoke interest or excitement or disgust or even apathy. The vital element is not to dictate how one must feel about their environment upon interaction, just that one actively experiences it.

Architects should not direct nor control, but they have the acumen to suggest how a space might be used. Once something, architecture included, is released into the public eye, it becomes autonomous. It will be seen out of context most of the time, belonging to everybody in a different way. The architecture will have infinite lives, experienced through each new inhabitant, visitor and observer, and each experience should be as valid as the original. An understanding of and appreciation for the intangible characteristics of architecture that exist on the same scale of "pure", tradional elements allows us to view a new, complete image of the substance that is space - which can further inform subsequent design and analysis of spaces in the future.

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Modern architecture against an atmospheric, historic background of Athens, Greece

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Turkish men create a social atmosphere and place on an empty dock in Batman, Turkey

Epilogue

The settlement of some 750 families in the abandoned tower block Torre David came to an end in 2014. The Venezuelan government called for the residents eviction so that the tower could be finished and restored to its original function as luxury offices, with investment from Chinese companies to fund the completion of the project. As part of the 'regeneration' proposals, residents of the Torre David community would be offered space in a new social housing just outside of the city, especially constructed for the purpose of keeping the community together. In my view, it is a sad end to a groundbreaking social experiement and organic situation, as corporate powers and 'needs' overbear that of social spaces. Residents who accepted their rehousing to a new development would likely find dull, quickly and cheaply constructed structures, lacking entirely in atmosphere or thought for community desires, such as the rich layers of lived space they left behind, and simply be presented with basic shelter and ammenities.

Fig. 28. Torre David from above: layers of lived space

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All of the images in this paper have been edited by me. The remainder of images not referenced are my own photographs.

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"Perhaps planning makes no difference whatsoever. Buildings may be placed well or badly. They flourish/perish unpredictably"
(Barker, 1999)

Highrise office blocks dominate the scene of traditional domestic housing, Mekong Delta region, Vietnam