

Aesthetic Space: The Visible and the Invisible in Urban Agency

THÈSE N° 6445 (2017)

PRÉSENTÉE LE 16 MAI 2017

À LA FACULTÉ DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT NATUREL, ARCHITECTURAL ET CONSTRUIT
LABORATOIRE CHÔROS
PROGRAMME DOCTORAL EN ARCHITECTURE ET SCIENCES DE LA VILLE

ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FÉDÉRALE DE LAUSANNE

POUR L'OBTENTION DU GRADE DE DOCTEUR ÈS SCIENCES

PAR

Mirza TURSIĆ

acceptée sur proposition du jury:

Prof. B. Marchand, président du jury
Prof. J. Lévy, directeur de thèse
Prof. M. Jakob, rapporteur
Prof. L. Matthey, rapporteur
Dr L. Pattaroni, rapporteur



ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE
FÉDÉRALE DE LAUSANNE

Suisse
2017

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Prof. Jacques Lévy for his continuous support, motivation and thoroughness. His incisiveness and intellectual acuity were fundamental throughout the research and writing phases of this thesis. I thank him for teaching me that one should not find their way, but invent it.

Additional thanks go to Prof. Bruno Marchand, Prof. Michael Jakob, Prof. Laurent Matthey and Dr. Luca Pattaroni for their participation on my thesis committee. Their feedback and ideas remain an invaluable inspiration for my future scientific activities.

My sincere thanks also go to Prof. Ognjenka Finci, Prof. Lemja Chabbouh Akšamija and Prof. Adnan Pašić for their crucial support at the very beginning of my academic odyssey.

I recognize that this research would not have been possible without the Swiss government, from which I received a three-year excellence scholarship through the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS). I am particularly grateful to Karin Delavy-Juillerat and Nathalie Miazza for their unfailing support from my very first day at the EPFL.

I am sincerely grateful to those who accepted to be interviewed and generously shared their time and experience for the purposes of this project. This work would not have been possible without their participation.

I acknowledge my deep gratitude towards Prof. Boris Beaudé, Dr. Ogier Maitre and Dr. Patrick Poncet for taking time to discuss my ideas and enlightening me on various aspects. A very special thanks also go to Kelly Harrison for the important role she played in this thesis.

I thank my fellow Chôros colleagues for their continuous help and support, for the stimulating discussions and for the unrepeatable working atmosphere. I thank all of them, especially Farzaneh Bahrami, Dr. Ceyda Bakbasa, Dr. Manouk Borzakian, Dr. Elsa Chavinier, Dr. Jean-Nicolas Fauchille, Dr. Luc Guillemot, Dr. Shin Koseki, Carole Lanoix, Dr. Barbara Laurent-Lucchetti, Dr. Véronique Mauron Layaz, Thibault Romany, Jade Rudler, Dr. Monique Ruzicka-Rossier, Lucas Tiphine, and Lei Yan.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at the EPFL's Architecture and Sciences of the City Doctoral School for our conversations, courses and excursions. A special thanks to Dr. Michael Doyle for his help with English and to Sandra Bottà, our lucky star.

Outside of the lab, plenty of people kept me happy in Lausanne. I am lucky to have met Basile Perret, Elma Hadžikadunić, Senad Hasanović and Susi Hasanović and I thank

them for their friendship and unyielding support. A special thanks also go to Marianne Cabi-Akman and Robert Cabi-Akman for backing me for years.

I thank Virginie Roy-Kotrčová for her help with interview transcriptions and to Marie-Noëlle Wurm for her outstanding work as a proofreader.

I cannot forget my dear friends in Tuzla and Sarajevo who celebrated my every accomplishment. A very special thanks go to Lejla Tahirović, Peđa Kurtović and Tarik Musakadić.

Last but not least, I thank my parents and my brother for their unconditional love. Without them, I would never be where I am today.

Lausanne, 30 April 2017

To my parents

To my brother

Abstract

Recent "turns" in social sciences, namely the visual, qualitative, actorial or spatial turns, all indicate a rising interest in individuals. Since the aesthetic dimension always nourishes and informs individuals' spatialities and their decision-making processes, my research explores how the subjective realm of the aesthetic has proved itself able to generate conditions that lead to action, and consequently influence other dimensions of society, especially in the ethical, political or legal realms. My systemic approach is grounded in the relational theory of space, the phenomenological study of the imagination, and the theory of urbanity. Hence, I investigated both urbanity and beauty as some of the most intriguing and interesting emergent (and not resultant!) phenomena of the urban system — where urbanity belongs to its objective realm and beauty to its subjective realm.

It is essential to recognize that humans, unlike the components that create the natural systems, are capable of a particular sort of action due to their imaginative capacities that allow them to overpass the actual perceived world. The aesthetic dimension directly involves the human imaginative consciousness, which in turn activates the realm of the virtual, i.e., the realm that which exists only in a latent state, and does not appear visibly (fr. *qui n'est qu'en puissance*). While engaged in aesthetic experience, humans exhibit a particular sort of intentionality through which they bring to mind what is not visible through what is present and perceived. By making use of their lived body, individuals are capable to engage in a particular sort of imaginative play through which memories of the past, anticipations of the future and the actualized perceived present are conjured together, informing one another. Since every human intentional experience is spatialized, I investigated a particular spatial structure through which aesthetic experience occurs as such. I called this structure aesthetic space.

In the last chapter, I investigate more precisely the influence of the urban environment on the way in which individuals' aesthetic judgments evolve and mature. By considering the experience of modernity and the city as pivotal in the construction of individuals' aesthetic sensitivities, I explore the spatial component of aesthetic judgments on some particular cases. I also focus on the importance of the urban public space, the lifestyle change, as well as on the period of childhood, which appear to be critical to the (aesthetic) development of individuals.

Keywords: space, aesthetics, urban system, urbanity, city, imagination, experience, Switzerland.

Résumé

Les nouveaux tournants en sciences sociales, et notamment le visual turn, le tournant qualitatif, le tournant actoriel, ou le tournant spatial, mettent tous un accent particulier sur l'importance de l'individu. Puisque la dimension esthétique nourrit et façonne la spatialité des individus et leurs processus de prise de décision, ma recherche explore comment la subjectivité de l'esthétique peut générer des conditions qui mènent à des actions concrètes, et donc influencer d'autres dimensions de la société, en particulier les domaines éthiques, politiques et légaux. Mon approche systémique est fondée sur la théorie relationnelle de l'espace, l'étude phénoménologique de l'imagination, et la théorie de l'urbanité. J'ai donc étudié les concepts esthétiques et le concept d'urbanité, qui sont parmi les phénomènes les plus intrigants et intéressants qui puissent émerger (et non résulter !) des phénomènes du système urbain — l'urbanité faisant partie de son objectivité, et les concepts esthétiques de sa subjectivité.

Il est essentiel de souligner que les humains, contrairement aux éléments de systèmes naturels, sont capables de mener des actions particulières grâce à leurs capacités imaginatives. Celles-ci leur permettent de transcender le monde actuel perçu par les sens. La dimension esthétique fait directement appel à la conscience imaginative, qui, à son tour, active l'espace virtuel, c'est-à-dire l'espace qui n'existe que dans un état latent — ce qui n'est qu'en puissance. Lorsqu'un individu vit une expérience esthétique, il démontre une sorte d'intentionnalité en faisant appel à ce qui n'est pas visible à travers ce qui est perçu et présent. En utilisant son corps vécu, il se livre à une sorte de jeu imaginaire, où les souvenirs du passé, les attentes futures, et la connaissance sur le présent actualisé, ont évoqués en simultané, se nourrissant les uns les autres. Puisque toute expérience humaine est spatialisée, j'ai décidé d'étudier une structure spatiale particulière où se manifeste l'expérience esthétique. J'ai appelé cette structure l'espace esthétique.

Mots-clé : espace, esthétique, système urbain, urbanité, ville, imagination, expérience, Suisse.

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Abstract	5
Résumé	6
List of figures	11
INTRODUCTION: AN OPENING QUESTION	13
I SOCIETY AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL COMPLEX SYSTEM	19
Space, Time & Knowledge	20
Newton versus Leibniz	21
Absolute Space versus Relational Space: Being versus Order	24
Space of Knowledge and Knowledge of Space	25
Systemism as an Anchor for a Critical Social Theory	28
Intentionality of Collective and Individual Action	28
Can We Reject and Affirm Both Individualism and Holism?	30
Studying Human Agency	33
Adopting Systemic Approach	37
Emergent System Properties: More is Different	39
Humans and Self-organization	42
Space and Distance	43
Three Attributes of Space: Scale, Metrics and Substance	44
Distance as a Keyword	47
Place as a Distance Made Irrelevant	48
Spatiality As an Action that Produces Space	50
2 THE AESTHETIC DIMENSION OF SOCIETY	53
Art versus Aesthetics	54
The Aesthetic is Other Than the Artistic	54
Art as Experience	56
The Aesthetic	57

The Origin of Aesthetics	58
The Kantian Method	59
Imagination	62
The Phenomenology of Imagination	64
Imagination and Freedom	68
The Double Intentionality of Aesthetic Judgement	70
The City as Aesthetic Object	72
3 URBANITY	75
The World is Spatial and Founded on Action	76
Inhabiting in the Society of Individuals	78
Urbanity as Phenomenon Emerging From a Combination of Density and Diversity	81
The City As a Fundamental Concept For Critical Urban Theory	83
Measuring Emergent Phenomena	86
Some Hypotheses On the Aesthetic Dimension of Urban Agency	87
4 THE METHODOLOGY	89
Studying Subjectivity: A Spatial and Historical Analysis of Aesthetic Judgment	90
Action and Discourse on Action	92
Us and Them	93
The Interviews and Selection of Participants	94
The Semi-Open Interview	95
A Photography as a Method	97
The Meaning of Photographs	100
A Punctum as an Analogon	103
Preparing and Conducting Photo-elicitation Interview: Theory as a Sampling Device	104
5 AESTHETIC SPACE	125
The Production of Aesthetic Space	126
Aesthetic Space Depends on Both Actuality and Virtuality of Aesthetic Object	130
The Medial Character of Aesthetic Object	137
Emergence of Beauty and Aesthetic Emotions	143
The Aesthetic Dimension as a Component of Spatiality	149
The Aesthetic Character of Existence	155
Aesthetic Judgements as Unactualised Societal Choices	162
The Aesthetics of Everyday Life	168
The Aesthetic Network: A Topology of Aesthetic Places	170

6 THE AESTHETIC DIMENSION OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT	174
Aesthetic Sensibilities in Switzerland	176
The Beginnings of Spatial Planning in Switzerland: The Legacy of the Romantics and the Modernists	177
Landscape as an Aesthetic Place Oscillating Between Pristine Nature and Pure Artefact	185
Modernity and the Problem of Style	194
Aesthetic Judgement and the Gradients of Urbanity	206
Aesthetic Judgement Matures in the Urban Environment	217
Public Space is a Space Per Excellence Where our Aesthetic Sensitivities Evolve and Mature	218
Childhood as a Critical Period	224
“Living Here and Not Elsewhere”: The Aesthetic Dimension of the Residential Choice	234
7 CONCLUSIONS: ON COEXISTENCE OF THE ACTUAL WITH THE VIRTUAL	242
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	247

List of figures

1	Bulle, Yves André, 2008	12
2	La Clairvoyance, René Magritte, 1936	52
3	Photo 1, Lavaux Vineyard Terraces, Nicolas Guérin, 2007	109
4	Photo 2, Lemanic Lake Riviera, 2015	110
5	Photo 3, Lausanne, 2015	111
6	Photo 4, Lausanne, 2015	112
7	Photo 5, Lausanne, 2015	113
8	Photo 6, Morges, 2015	114
9	Photo 7, Roche, 2015	115
10	Photo 8, Lutry, 2015	116
11	Photo 9, Lausanne, 2015	117
12	Photo 10, Lausanne, 2015	118
13	Photo 11, Lausanne, 2015	119
14	Photo 12, Lonay, 2015	120
15	Photo 13, Morges, 2015	121
16	Photo 14, Montreux, 2015	122
17	Photo 15, Denges, 2015	123
18	Photo 16, Genève, 2015	124
19	Le portrait, René Magritte, 1935	136
20	La condition humaine, René Magritte, 1933	184
21	The production of aesthetic space	244



Fig. 1 - Bulle, © Ives André (2008, 9)

Introduction: An Opening Question

To begin, I suggest taking a moment to briefly observe Ives André's photograph of a residential area in the Swiss municipality of Bulle (Fig. 1). Here is a possible description of what can be seen in the photograph: a group of single-family houses, each with their own small garden; a number of houses behind them; a wooden storage warehouse; a grassy field; flowers along a fence; and a crane and construction site in the background. In the distance, there are mountains and a sky. That's about it. The photograph creates a persistent impression that there isn't much else to see. Than if one wants to know more about this neighborhood, they can investigate who exactly lives in the blue house or the yellow house, how much they earn, where and how do they go for work, shopping and school, and so on. If one accumulates more and more facts about this particular urban situation, it is certain that one will begin to perceive a greater number of details in the photograph itself. This leads to a number of questions: Is the entire reality of the neighborhood encompassed only in what presents itself to the eyes of the spectator? Is the visual completely surrendered to the dictatorship of the visible? This would imply that the accumulation of factual objective knowledge on what actually and materially exist (or have existed) is the only way that humans grasp the reality.

But isn't it true that when an individual looks at an object, they also imagine it? Isn't it easily verifiable that two individuals with a similar economic, cultural and educational background can significantly differ in the ways they experience inhabited environments? These are the questions that arose as I looked at André's photograph with my thesis advisor Jacques Lévy; and they became encapsulated in this rather simple question: Why is it that some people find the neighborhood represented on the photograph beautiful while others see nothing but ugliness? This thesis is the result of my attempt to answer that question.

Like anyone who has ever decided to step out of their own discipline and enter into a new field, I first had to pay some theoretical dues. As an architect, I was almost completely unaware of the theoretical richness of human geography and urban sociology, and I had little understanding of the 2000 year-old debate around the concept of beauty,

and even less understanding of the 267 year-old western philosophical disagreements on aesthetics. Coming from a discipline that claims, perhaps more than any other discipline, to be involved in space-making, I realized how deficient architecture was in its instruments of self-criticism. By uncritically employing an understanding of space that dates back to the Renaissance or Antiquity, and also by stubbornly insisting on its total autonomy as a discipline, architecture has constantly remained stuck at the beginnings of its transformation which was supposed to go along with the urban transformation. Since architects constantly fail to engage substantively with other disciplines, the abyss between architecture and society just keeps getting bigger. As George Kubler observes in his influential work "The Shape of Time" (1962), no major architect of the twentieth century has been able to practice without taking on the evangelist mission of improving the visible world by imposing his own sensibility on the world. I believe that this comes as a manifestation of a hidden ontological belief that architectural education provides architects with a unique knowledge that allows them alone to climb Platonic leaders, leaving behind laypersons in an aesthetic darkness. Both academia and architectural practices still remain dominated by the idea that architects (together with artists perhaps) have exclusive access to the 'Beautiful'.

More recently, some important steps were made towards interdisciplinarity and many architects are beginning to understand that architecture is becoming more and more about research. Architects have understood that they are actors at the service of society, and not vice-versa. My intention with this thesis is not to negate the materiality on which the field of architecture is founded, nor am I questioning the particular conditions of the historical development of architecture; Rather, I argue that architecture must go beyond formalism and engage more substantively and critically in the production of the contemporary urban fabric. Architectural problems are societal problems and, as such, are multidimensional, complex, and highly dependent on the agency of individuals, where each individual has their own understanding and portrayals of society.

Today, I see that in my academic childhood, I was given the opportunity to explore a variety of disciplines, without being given too much epistemological ground a priori. I can thank Jacques Lévy for giving me this freedom, with his enthusiastic encouragements and his excitement for novel ideas. I realized during the writing of my thesis that the difficulty in structuring a conversation between the fields of urban sciences and aesthetic theory has a lot to do with the extreme richness of each of the approaches, and even more to do with the fact that each discipline has evolved more or less independently. Only a few urban scientists are profoundly interested in the nature of the aesthetic experience, and even less scholars in the field of aesthetics consider the existential nature of our modern urban condition as being important. While space still represents a major

epistemological obstacle for many researchers, this thesis is a contribution to a bridge that needs to be built between aesthetic theories and urban theories.

Beauty does not emerge as a result of a simple aggregation. A collection of beautiful houses does not necessarily create a beautiful neighborhood. Different types of beauty emerge at each level of complexity. The same principle applies to urbanity, which belongs to the type of unplanned and unintended phenomena that emerge from people's intentions and actions. The failure to acknowledge this fact has led some thinkers and researchers to proclaim that both urbanity and beauty are mere myths. But fact, they simply failed to realise that aesthetic and urban problems are systemic problems and therefore need to be approached as such. My systemic approach is grounded in the relational theory of space, the phenomenological study of the imagination, and the theory of urbanity. Hence, I investigated both urbanity and aesthetic concepts, as some of the most intriguing and interesting emergent (and not resultant!) phenomena of the urban system, urbanity belonging to its objective realm and aesthetic concepts to its subjective realm. Since aesthetics belongs to the subjective realm of our conceptual scheme of reality, it raises the question of the emergence of a subject. I consider aesthetics to be one of the dimensions of the complex multidimensional system called 'society', and consider subjectivity to be spatialized and spatially produced. In this sense, I approached the aesthetic experience from a spatial perspective, which helped me investigate the mechanisms by which the aesthetic dimension influenced the structuration of the Swiss urban environment.

By definition, the systemic approach favors multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. I want to emphasize the importance of the word 'approach' because systemism, as Mario Bunge writes, is not an encompassing theory, but rather just a framework, "a skeleton to be fleshed out with specific hypotheses and data" (Bunge 1996, 265). The 'skeleton' of this study is made up of elements from a variety of different fields: the relational theory of space by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (supplemented by writings of Martin Heidegger); the systemism of Mario Bunge and Norbert Elias; the aesthetic theory of Immanuel Kant, John Dewey and Roger Scruton; the phenomenological tradition of Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty; the writings of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau on the subject of the city; the theory of urbanity by Jacques Lévy, the research on photography by Roland Barthes and John Collier, and many others scientist and thinkers who wrote on space, place, experience, beauty, image, urbanity, city, modernity, and style — to name some of the principal keywords covered in this thesis. The 'flesh' of this study came primarily from the experience of Swiss inhabitants who accepted to participate in the study and to whom I am unbelievably grateful. I can't thank them enough. By pointing out some of the most intriguing aspects of human existence, which

they arrived at by engaging their imagination, these individuals became true co-producers of scientific knowledge.

The thesis is divided into two parts, with three chapters to each part. The first chapter concerns the epistemological background required to understand this thesis. It also contains my arguments for adopting two assumptions upon which the rest of my work strongly depends: First, that space is relational and not an absolute category; Second, that the study of society, which is a multidimensional complex system, needs to take into account both individual agency and social structures. Society is organized according to the articulation of the various dimensions that run through it. Therefore, it would be wrong for a researcher to assume that one dimension is more important than any other — though they can still be studied separately. The second chapter introduces the idea that one of the many dimensions of society is the aesthetic dimension. I first provide arguments to reject the idea that the aesthetic is the equivalent of the artistic, and then argue that the agency of urban actors is highly influenced by the aesthetic component. The third chapter introduces a concept of urbanity based on the ideas of functional and sociological diversity and multidimensional density. The main goal was to use urbanity as a means of approaching the spatial component of aesthetic judgments and aesthetic experiences. In the fourth chapter, I introduce my main method, which consisted in the preparation, conduction and analysis of interviews with inhabitants of the Lemanic lake region in Switzerland. In the fifth chapter, I develop what I consider to be the principal novelty of my work: the concept of aesthetic space, an order that allows the co-existence of the realm of the actual and the realm of the virtual. The idea is that the possibility of things does not simply precede their existence, or in other words, that the virtual does not simply precede the actual — rather, the virtual is an aspect of the real. As aesthetic experience embraces both the actual and the virtual, it becomes a constitutive part of one's spatiality, and therefore, aesthetics cannot be ignored by any science interested in human spaces. Finally, in the last chapter, I investigate more precisely the influence of the urban environment on the way in which individuals' aesthetic judgments evolve and mature. By considering the experience of modernity and the city as pivotal in the construction of individuals' aesthetic sensitivities, I explore the spatial component of aesthetic judgments on some particular cases in the Swiss distant and near history. I also focus on the importance of the urban public space, as well as on the period of childhood, which both appear to be critical to the (aesthetic) development of individuals. While this work was inevitably written in linear manner, I must underline the circular process through which the theories, hypotheses and results mutually nurtured and influenced each other. What is involved here is the process known as abduction, which implies going from a fact to the theory that most likely explains it.

This is a study made jointly with Swiss inhabitants. However, my intention was not to give an overview of the complex processes that have structured the Swiss urban environment. Other researchers, with an in-depth knowledge of the local historical, political and social circumstances, have already attempted this task, with varying degrees of success. By taking an aesthetic perspective, my intention was to tackle certain particular aspects of contemporary society that have been taken for granted up till now. What I learned quite rapidly as I worked on my thesis is that writing about contemporary society cannot be done without underlining the singularity of the individuals that participate in its day-to-day production. This is why I decided to write about the deepest feelings of several Swiss inhabitants, hoping that, in doing so, I will have revealed something new about the emerging world-society and its contemporary urban condition.

I Society as a Multidimensional Complex System

“Man is faber and sapiens, economicus and politicus, artifex and ludens.”

Mario Bunge

When a researcher is confronted with problems raised by the aesthetic appreciation of an environment, they often perform their studies by isolating the realm of aesthetics as an autonomous dimension of human existence and search for solutions within it. In this study, I will use a different method. I will discuss aesthetics as being one of the mutually interconnected dimensions of the human complex system we call society. It is important to keep in mind that unlike the components of natural systems, human beings are capable of carrying out specific actions due to their capacity to make choices and create new alternatives in spite of external constraints. Since space is rooted in the separation between humans and their artefacts one of the most important tasks of urban sciences is to investigate the nature and structure behind this separation. Aesthetics is important precisely because it makes things closer in one respect and puts things further away from each other in another. However, before I tackle the problem of aesthetics I will provide some arguments on why is it so important to first investigate the very nature of space. It is only through one or another understating of space that the scientific knowledge can expand and develop and scientists need to know why this is so.

Space, Time & Knowledge

Each experience is spatial. It is also temporal. In this sense, space and time are the two basic pillars that support all knowledge, including theoretical knowledge. However, their deeper meaning for the structure of knowledge is not exhausted in this. It is rather that through a certain understanding of space and time, knowledge gradually expands and moves into new directions. As Cassirer put it: “The more knowledge inquires into the structure of space and time, the more certainly it returns into itself; only through inquiry into the structure of space and time does knowledge grasp the nature of its basic premises and particular principles. Knowledge wishes to encompass being in its completeness, to measure it in its spatial and temporal infinity; but it learns that this task of measuring can only be accomplished when it has drawn up and secured the measurements for itself in advance” (Cassirer 1969, 3). The question is thus: How does a certain conception of space and time relate to human understanding of the world at large? Once the answer to this question is provided, a researcher will be able to provide an answer to another question, equally important to anyone who studies urban space and spaces created by humans in general. This second question is: How do human actions and practices (including scientific actions and practices) change when the different conceptions of space and time are used?

Let me begin by discussing the first problem. The entry point I chose was informed by philosophical reflection, for two main reasons. First, philosophy aspires to rise above different fields of human practices in order to assign all-encompassing meanings to the categories we use, and by doing so it can bring clarity, depth and coherence to a scientific discourse. Second, we call upon philosophy because it is a practice that not only help us to know ourselves and help us to think, but also teaches us to act as if nothing were self-evident — an attitude of fundamental importance for any scientist involved in a better comprehension of reality. Bearing this in mind, let me introduce the problem of space and the importance of this problem for the rest of theoretical and scientific knowledge.

When one say that something is “in space”, the idea that spontaneously imposes itself is that space is made of some kind of substance in which one can put things. It is as if space itself is an absolute and stable being upon which one can build relations and further determine the quality of things (e.g. here or there, up or down, big or small, etc.). But then the logical question would be to ask what is this substance or being of space? The existence of a “substance” above all categories was one of the fundamental postulates of

Aristotelian logic and metaphysics, and thus everything, and space itself, was an extension of this primal matter. It's possible, as Cassirer argues, that modern theories and science emerged with the attempt to replace these medieval Aristotelian categories. This epistemological and metaphysical problem gave birth to one the most famous disagreements in the history of modern thought: the disagreement between Newton and Leibniz, which is not completely concluded even today. The theories of these two important thinkers have by no means lost their value and they are still very present in modern thought, even though their ideas are expressed in a different manner.

Newton versus Leibniz

At end of the Aristotelian dominance of western philosophy, which is also the moment when the empirical philosophy was born, there were two avenues through which scientific and philosophical thought expressed itself. In the correspondence between Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, who acted as a spokesman for Isaac Newton, these two alternatives were clearly indicated. This correspondence was one of the most important philosophical exchanges of the eighteenth century, and perhaps one of the most substantial of such exchanges in the history of western thought. Although Newton and Leibniz grew up in the same philosophical environment and their philosophical relationship was initially marked by respectful disagreement, after the publication of Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in 1687 (often referred to as simply the *Principia*), their ways strongly diverged. It was a collision between two fundamentally different philosophical approaches: the deductive ideal of scientific thought in the case of Leibniz, and the empirical, merely inductive method championed by Newton. The dispute between Leibniz and Newton started off as a religious and metaphysical disagreement about the nature of God and the structure of the material universe, but today the disagreement between the two philosophers is seen as a logical and epistemological problem, rather than a metaphysical one. In the philosophy of Leibniz, it was first of all the logical structure of space and time which was seen in a new light. The novelty of his approach was to critically study the meaning of notions of space and of time, and not desperately searching for the essence of these notions. This critical tendency of thought proved to have far-reaching consequences not only in the fields of science and philosophy, but also on the way humans understand and shape the world today.

According to the theory of Newton, space is distinct from body. He used the term absolute space to distinguish it from the different ways by which we measure it. Space was "an infinitely extended absolute entity quite independent of matter, in all its essential logical and mathematical properties" (Cassirer 1943, 423). Matter occupies only a small

part of space and cannot exist independently. Space becomes thus a container within which matter is located. For Newton space and time were both real things which belonged to the material world and constituted the framework of reality itself. When Newton speaks of individuation of a physical object he thinks of its particular position in absolute space. Thus the individuality of particular physical mass is defined by its location in space. Another important thing to retain is that Newton's space was homogeneous and had no qualitative differences to distinguish one part from another.

Leibniz asserts this to be all wrong, for it violated both of Leibniz's basic philosophical premises. First, the homogeneity of Newton's space is incompatible with the Leibnizean principle of identity of indiscernibles, meaning that there cannot be separate objects or entities that have all their properties in common. According to Leibniz, it is from the intrinsic differences of the substances that relationships between substances are derived. And second, the location of the bodies at certain points in absolute space rather than at other points becomes completely random (for a detail analysis see Northrop 1946). If such a conception is taken as a basic premise of physics than, as F.S.C. Northrop observes, violates the Leibnizean principle of sufficient reason, meaning that everything must have a reason or a cause.¹

Thus Leibniz proposed a view according to which space possessed no substantial reality of its own. The same was true for the notion of time. His idea was that space and time were based on relations and mere *entia rationis*, like mathematical entities. He expressed his famous definition in his third letter to Clarke:

“For my part, I have said several times that I hold space to be something merely relative, as time is, taking space to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions” (Alexander 1998).

When Clarke responded that “space and time are quantities; which situation and order are not”, Leibniz further explained in his last letter) the three-step process by which “men come to form to themselves the notion of space” (Alexander 1998, see also Vailati 1997). The first step begins as an observation of the elements that make the real world: “(Humans) consider that many things exist at once and they observe in them a certain

¹ On the problem of this principle see Mario Bunge's work “Causality and Modern Science”: “The admission of this axiom dispenses us from performing the impossible task of explaining the existence of the sum total of existents—a task that is thereby rendered an apparent question. It does not dispense us, however, from the duty of explaining the changes in the world or the existence of the various parts of it - which can be explained, at least in principle, as the outcome of processes” (Bunge 2012, 238).

order of co-existence, according to which the relation of one thing to another is more or less simple. This order is their situation or distance". (Here the notion of metrics is essential, for it provides us with a quality or a type of distance among the different realities that enter into the constitution of a particular space. Without metrics all spaces would be the same!). Then, according to Leibniz, the process of abstraction takes place, and it includes the construction of the notion of the "same place". He therefore writes that "[w]hen it happens that one of those coexistent things changes its relation to a multitude of others, which do not change their relation among themselves; and that another thing, newly come, acquires the same relation to the others, as the former had; we then say, it is come into the place of the former" (Alexander 1998). We do not stop at the consideration of the positions bodies actually occupy or have occupied, but we also consider "that relation which any other co-existent would have to this, or which any other co-existent would have to any other, if it had not changed, or if it had changed any otherwise" (Alexander 1998). This means, as Vailati has observed "that we employ counterfactuals by considering, for example, that body A could have been in place of body B and that body D could have been between A and B, where nothing is now. Now two bodies having the same relation of situation with respect to others assumed as fixed, have the same place" (1997, 114). Richard Arthur also noticed that Leibniz's construction of space and place involves the use of counterfactuals (see Arthur 1994). Here it is important to highlight the fundamental importance of place formation; as for Leibniz, the third and the final step is to consider all the places together: "that which comprehends all those places, is called space" (Alexander 1998). We might sum this up by saying that first we construct places from possible relations of distance between different realities, and then from places, we construct space (see Arthur 1994; Khamara 1993; Broad 1946). It would be safe to say that the process of space formation and place formation is, in fact, cyclic - from places we abstract spaces which then serve us to create other places.

Leibniz illustrates his idea with an example. He suggests that space is analogous to a genealogical tree that exists only as a system of relations between different members of a family. This abstracted structure, as Leibniz writes to one of his critics, "relates not only to what actually is but also to anything which could be put in its place, just as numbers are indifferent to the things which can be enumerated. This inclusion of the possible with the existent makes a continuity which is uniform and indifferent to any division" (Vailati 1997, 115). In this sense, the relational conception of space can embrace

Newton's absolute conception (if we want to situate body "A" in an absolute space, we can do it just by relating it to body "B" and body "C"). This means that the relational understanding allows us a much larger implication of space: indeed, it implies that space is real and can be known, which is an essential premise for any scientific criticism on spatial distribution and differentiation. In this sense, the relational paradigm provides us with a tool for critical thinking, which, as Karl Popper has argued, is the very essence of rationality.

Absolute Space versus Relational Space: Being versus Order

Space and time are thus an ideal set of relations. This resolved the fundamental problem of how to unite the very natures of space and time, with the nature of the content which enters into their constitution. As Cassirer explains, there was a fundamental contradiction in Newton's conception of space:

"If, (...) we insist on putting 'things' like space and time under the genus of being as an all-encompassing primary concept, than we find that this genus itself represents only an illusory unity. It includes not only different things but opposing and antagonistic ones. (...) Being cannot transform its nature without denying and losing itself in this transformation i.e. falling victim to its opposite - non-being. (...) When it is brought under the category of thing, of the mere category of substance, and examined under this viewpoint, the absolute being of space soon becomes its non-being; it is transformed from something all-encompassing and all-explaining into an absurdity" (1969, 5-6).

Leibniz managed to override this paradox by establishing the concept of order. Space and time have their true objectivity in relations (now truth itself is to be searched in relations!), and in this sense Leibniz "anticipated the solution which modern physics has found regarding the problem of space and time". For modern physics, "The world is not defined as an entity of bodies 'in' spacetime, not as an occurrence 'in' time, but it is viewed as a 'system of occurrences', of events, as Whitehead says; space and time enter into the determinations of these events, into their lawful order, as conditions, as essential and necessary moments" (Cassirer 1969, 7). Space thus becomes a possibility of coexistence and it is important to note that it refers not only to the actual but as well as the virtual. It is equally important to emphasize that the "ideality" of Leibniz's space and time never meant to cast any doubt upon the objectivity of these concepts. Now, the question is: what does the transformation of the concept of being into a concept of order imply?

In the “New Essays” Leibniz writes: “By virtue of insensible variations, two individual things can never be perfectly alike (...) and they must always differ more than *numero*. This at one puts out of court (...) a substance without action, the void in space, atoms and even particles not actually divided in matter, absolute rest, complete uniformity in one part of time, place, or matter” (cited in Northrop 1946, 435). As it has been stated previously, it is exactly in the uniformity of Newton’s absolute space, that his concept falls into a contradiction. Let us not forget that the absolute identity of being, of which unity and uniformity constitute its basic logical character, was recognized by its first philosophical discoverer, a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Parmenides. In an important passage for the future history of the Western philosophy, Parmenides rejects motion in favour of immobility, arguing that reality is unchanging whole:

“Abiding the same in the same place it rests by itself, and so abides from where it is; for strong Necessity holds it firm within the bounds of the limit that keeps it back on every side ...” (Cassirer 1969).

Cassirer reminds us of this fact and further argues that “[a]s soon as the point of gravity in thought shifts from the pole of being to the pole of order in the total theoretical view of reality and specifically in the theoretical conception and interpretation of space, then a victory of pluralism over abstract monism, of a multiplicity of forms over a single form, is established” (Cassirer 1969, 8). This means that the diversity of possible formations of space depends on the diversity of possible relations between its constitutive elements. As we shall see later, this shift in understanding of space and time does not only hold a profoundly different way of formulating questions regarding aesthetics, but it represents a fundamental transformation for the larger spectrum of practical knowledge and our scientific understanding of the world.

Space of Knowledge and Knowledge of Space

For Immanuel Kant human experience depends on both the sensory data that we receive passively and the way our mind actively processes this data according to its own a priori categories. This second component of our experience brings order into the indeterminate manifold of our sensation. In this sense it is a priori element to all experience - a pure form of sensibility which Kant calls pure intuition. Space and time as two pure intuitions, as Kant famously argued in the “Critique of Pure Reason”, become thus structural conditions of existence.

Unlike Kant, I will not argue that space and time precede experience, but like Kant, I would like to underline the fact that humans have innate (i.e. natural) cognitive capacities for observing and creating relations between elements of reality which evolve to become structures of space and time. Consequently space becomes not an object of perception, but rather a possibility of experiencing the world. Recent findings in neurobiology suggest that space formation is one of the fundamental cognitive functions and that humans as well as other animals have functional brain cells that allow them to have spatial representations. A 2014 Nobel prize in physiology or medicine was attributed to John O'Keefe, May-Britt Moser and Edvard I. Moser precisely for their discoveries of cells that constitute a positioning system in the brain (Hafting et al. 2005; Fyhn et al. 2004). These cells are found in the hippocampus and entorhinal cortex - the components of the brain that are known to be affected in the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease which causes difficulties in finding our way around and recognizing environment. However, the scientific understanding of just what the hippocampus and other brain components do are still issues of considerable controversy (Kraus et al. 2015; Eichenbaum 2004; Eichenbaum et al. 1999). It might be safe to say that today, scientists are only at the beginning of understanding the physiological bases that lie behind information procession and its implications on human experience and space construction. It is in the early childhood that humans become engaged in the process of observing spatial relations and creating spatial differentiation and this act of separating and relating, comes on, with various intensity, until death.

Space matters. Michel Foucault illustrated this point by reminding us that “the real scandal of Galileo’s work lay not so much in his discovery, or rediscovery, that the earth revolved around the sun, but in his constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space. In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved” (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986). The idea here is that adopting one conception over another of space always brings with it heavy consequences for the rest of theoretical knowledge. From René Descartes to Hannah Arendt and Gilles Deleuze almost every philosopher has made their conception of space one of the essential components of their theoretical system. Yet when two different authors use the words such a “space” or “place” there is always a far-reaching uncertainty of interpretation, for, as Albert Einstein recognized, psychological relations with such concepts are less direct than with concepts such as “red”, “hard” or “disappointed” (see Einstein’s preface to Jammer 1969).

Different types of space, as Jammer points out, developed as the result of “a long and continuous process of abstraction” which “started in the mind of primitive man”, who was incapable of “abstracting the concept of space from the direct experience of it”. “To primitive man, ‘space’ was merely an accidental set of concrete orientations, a more or

less ordered multitude of local directions, each associated with certain emotional reminiscences. This primitive 'space', as experienced and subconsciously formed by the individual, may have been coordinated with a 'space' common to the group, the family or the tribe" (Jammer 1969, 6). Here it is important to observe that the constitution of space is based on relations manifested in experience and shared experience with other members of society in particular. I will elaborate on this fact later.

Although modern physics is surprisingly close to the definition of space as an "order of coexistences", nothing that Leibniz had to say against the idea of absolute space could prevent Newton's concept of becoming a fundamental prerequisite of most of scientific investigation. In his excellent analysis of the development of the notion of space, Jammer noticed "how little the actual progress of the science of mechanics was affected by general considerations concerning the nature of absolute space. Among the great French writers on mechanics, Lagrange, Laplace, and Poisson, none of them was much interested in the problem of absolute space. They all accepted the idea as a working hypothesis without worrying about its theoretical justification" (Jammer 1969, 137). Today, it can certainly be argued that the relational character of space is accepted on a rational basis, but there remains the question as to what extent it has been accepted on a philosophical or psychological basis?

Space is thus a different kind of knowledge from the knowledge of empirical phenomenal data for space itself is not known directly through senses. This is an important point of contact between the theories of Newton and Leibniz for they both agree on the fact that space is not given to us, i.e. it is not an observable physical quantity. They have different reasons for stating this. For Newton, space and time, as absolute entities, are beyond the reach of immediate sense perception. However, Newton felt that absolute space is indirectly accessible to us by means of observations of the effects of forces on bodies which are accelerated relative to absolute space (Erlichson 1967, 95). Leibniz denies this for his position is that "any physical concept such as force or acceleration can only have meaning within the observable universe, and cannot be referred to as metaphysical absolute space and time" (Erlichson 1967, 95). For him space and time are "pure intellectual forms which involve a constructive power of the human mind" (Cassirer 1969, 387).

A direct consequence of this position is that it puts the observer in an active rather than a passive position because the standpoint of the observer plays a critical role in the constitution of space. This further implies that societies, as Henri Lefebvre demonstrated (Lefebvre 1991), do not just occupy pre-given static space but they actually create space. Space is an active, not a passive element in the constitution and functioning of a society.

Therefore space and society are in a dialectical tension. The entry point in favor of a relational conception of space is not innocent and it already constitutes a heavy act for anyone who would study the problems raised by human societies. Once I have presented arguments in favor of the relational paradigm, I can continue my discussion, keeping in mind a notion of space as a element that actively participates in the creation of a society.

Systemism as an Anchor for a Critical Social Theory

Space is both a possibility of coexistence and an obstacle to interaction. It brings humans together and separates them at the same time. It is “a dimension of society, corresponding to the entirety of relations between different realities established by distance” (Lévy 2013, 359, translated from French). This definition provided by the “Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés”, underlines two important facts. First, that society is dimensional, or to be more precise, multidimensional. Every society organizes itself in the articulation between its different dimensions - economic, political, temporal, aesthetic or the spatial dimension, to name a few. And each of these different dimensions cuts across the whole of society. These dimensions hold together bonds of various kind among the different components of society. As society changes, all dimensions of society change. Individuals' understanding of economy and politics, as well as their ethical and aesthetic judgments follow this evolution. Second, it underlines a fundamental importance that space plays in human lives, resulting from the fact that there exists a distance between different realities of society. To understand and to master a distance provides us with a means of mastering and understanding our existence, our environments, and the world we live in. In the words of Boris Beaudé, “to change space, is to change relational conditions between what is, it is to change the World, it is to change the society” (Beaudé 2012, p.21). In every human action there is a spatial dimension. A non-spatial element of society cannot exist, for every element of society can be understood only in relation to other elements.

Intentionality of Collective and Individual Action

When Jacques Monod, who won the Nobel Prize for his contribution to biology, wrote his celebrated work “Chance and Necessity”, he was inspired by the following line attributed to Democritus: “Everything existing in the universe is the fruit of chance and necessity”. For Monod, nature is not projective and systems in nature, such as enzymatic biofeedback loops, can be explained without appealing to a final causality. However, in

the first chapter entitled “Of Strange Objects” he argues that “it is through reference to our own activity, conscious and projective, intentional and purposive” that our judgments are formed (Monod 1971, 3). This means that when studying human environments and societies scientists cannot count on general indetermination (chance) specific to natural sciences, but must insist on the intentional character of human actions.

Intentionality, as a central concept in philosophy of mind and a cornerstone of phenomenology, has influenced a wide range of literature in philosophy, sociology and cognitive sciences. The term derives from the Latin word *intentio*, which in turn derives from the verb *intendere*, which means “to point to” or “to aim at”. It was rehabilitated by the philosopher Franz Brentano in his work “Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint”, and is defined as follows:

“Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. (...)

This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We could, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.” (Brentano 1995, 88-89).

In these two famous passages Brentano characterized the intentionality of mental states (such as loving, remembering, believing, desiring, hoping) as their feature of each being ‘directed toward something’, i.e. a mental state of ‘aiming’ toward a certain state of affairs, as in the everyday sense of doing something with ‘intention’. As conscious beings, we are not only affected by the world: we are also ‘conscious of’ ourselves and other persons, of material or ideal objects and natural or urban environments which we bring before our mind. If we think about a car, something in our thought picks out a car. If we want to have a coffee, something in our speech refers to a coffee. Intentionality thus relates to the human self-consciousness, for when we are in a conscious mental state, it is ‘directed at’ or ‘about’ something. This representational character of consciousness, it’s

being 'of' or 'about' something, is intentionality. What is essential to understand is that while human visual experience is intentional it is also object-dependent and this important point will be elaborated later.

There are two fundamental features of intentionality, its existence-independence (we might think of things that do not exist as actualised) and its conception-dependence (we always conceive something in one or another particular way) (Smith and McIntyre 1982). This second feature of intentionality will appear to be of a particular importance for understanding the aesthetic experience. Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot have demonstrated a richness of the concept of intentionality in sociology, by aiming for a better understanding of individual and collective action (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991). It is precisely this broadening of the concept of intentionality to include both mental states and human action that make intentionality a rich concept for studying human spaces. This fact was recognised by Jacques Lévy who argued that "L'intentionnalité – le fait que les actions humaines préexistent dans les représentations des agents sous forme de finalités de la volonté ou du désir et les transforment ainsi en acteurs" (1994 p.36). This position, according to Michel Lussault, allows us to avoid the actor being reduced to a mere agent, which comes as inevitable result if we apply constructivist frame of interpretation (Lussault and Lévy 2000, 18). If the aim here is to consider issues raised by spaces of contemporary society, and if there is an interest in understanding how the urban actors get engaged in action, the question to be asked is what social theories are most appropriate for this investigation?

Can We Reject and Affirm Both Individualism and Holism?

There are three general and coherent research approaches in social studies: individualism, holism and systemism (Bunge 2000). Since each approach is characterized by its own problematics, each approach can handle only certain problems. If we attempt to reduce the three doctrines to a single thought we might use the following statements: 1. "There's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." (Margaret Tacher in an interview in "Women's Own" in 1987); 2. "Social life can be explained, not by the conceptions of those who participate in it, but by the deep causes which lie outside of consciousness." (Durkheim 2010, 250); 3. "Everything is a system or a component of one." (Bunge 1996, 264). Since the systemic approach accounts for both individual agency and social structure, the advantages of systemism are best appreciated when compared with its alternatives, methodological individualism and holism.

According to individualism, a society is a collection of individuals – an accumulation of individual actions. Consequently, social studies are ultimately studies of beliefs,

intentions and actions of the individuals concerned. This position usually implies the axiom, coming from utilitarianism, by which humans act rationally – that is, from self-interest (whether egoistic or altruistic). Many scientists have provided several objections to this view, particularly to its radical version. First, by postulating that all individuals are rational decision-makers who maximize utility, it does not allow for the uniqueness of every individual (Bunge 1996, 249). Since all individuals are considered identical and interchangeable, this presupposed uniformity; and constancy of human nature leads to a well-known paradox of sociology without a subject. Second, it is blind to the historical component of social interactions. By asserting the absolute primacy of the individual and of individual interests, this paradigm fails to account for the peculiarities of different societies, social movements and historical periods. Consequently feelings and intentions of individual actors become historically unavailable for questioning. Third, it provides a sterile opposition between the parts and the whole (Lévy 2013, 544). Fourth, it ignores one of the most “intriguing of all kinds of events in society”: the emergence of novelty (Bunge 1996). Finally, and perhaps most important of all, it fails to take into an account the multidimensional nature of societal problems – such as urban sprawl and pollution – that cannot be solved by doing one thing at a time precisely for they affect various dimensions at the same time (eg. political, economic or aesthetic dimension). However, the main virtue of individualism is its opposition to holism and its overly socialized picture of humans.

Holism holds that nature and society should be viewed and studied as whole entities, not as collections of parts. There are multiple meanings of the term holism (scientific, philosophical, epistemological, complementary, dialectical, moral etc.), reflecting diverse philosophical and methodological traditions (Ralston 2011). Bunge summarized its general ontological principles in the following theses: 1. A society is a whole entity transcending its members; thus any proper social study is a study of whole social entities; 2. A society has global properties, irreducible to any properties of the parts. Individual behavior is understandable in terms of the action of the entire structure (society) upon the individual; 3. Societies behave as units, they interact and change as whole entities (Bunge 1996, 260). Assuming for thesis that facts concerning the social world do not decompose into facts concerning individual entities, holism is the logical opposite of methodological individualism. The main objection to this paradigm is in its difficulty in dealing with change and thus in explaining emergence, subsistence or the decline of a society.

Methodological (or social) holism further implies that in conducting social inquiry, group qualities should be treated as emergent and irreducible to the isolated elements, a view closely associated with social theorist Emile Durkheim (Durkheim 1964; Ralston

2011). It does not hold the strong ontological claim that says that social groups exist in the same way as individuals, but postulates this only for the sake of the inquiry. This approach treats all individuals as reciprocally related and interdependent, such that the group displays independently emergent properties, rather than qualities that can be decomposed and attributed to individual members of the group. This should be considered as one of most important contributions of holism to social theory. The best example of how group properties influence individuals has been theorized by structuralists,² who appreciate structures in society as having independent causal powers beyond those attributed to individuals (Ralston 2011). Although, it has the merit of insisting that society is not just a collection of individuals and that every person is born in a pre-existing social system, it regards individual action as either negligible or the effect of pressure from above (Bunge 2011, 22).

A longstanding and unresolved debate over the primacy of individualism or holism stems from, which appears to be, two different understandings of social reality. Is society a structure transcending its members or simply as an aggregate of rational individuals? Recently, there has been a growing interest in developing a social theory that would combine the advantages of the two opposing approaches. As a result, today we are faced with significant theoretical diversity, different methodological tools and a rising number of studies of heterogeneous social phenomena. Despite this variety of approaches, Filippo Barbera, an Italian economic sociologist, argues that it is nevertheless possible to detect a shared approach, summarized in the expression ‘analytical sociology’ (Barbera 2004, see also Wan 2012).

In the introductory essay to the “Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology”, Peter Hedström assigns the following mission to this intellectual project:³ “to explain complex social processes by carefully dissecting them, bringing into focus their most important constituent components, and then to construct appropriate models which help us to understand why we observe what we observe” (Hedström and Bearman 2009). Hedström argues that “a path must be hewn between the eclectic empiricism of variable-

² Cornerstones of structuralist thought, according to Piaget (Piaget 1975) are: wholeness, transformation and self-regulation. Wholeness or completeness is “defining mark of structures” and relates to the scope of investigation. Transformation was introduced to the theory after criticism addressed to the early structuralists since structures would ossify without possibility to change over time. Altdought, theoretical constructs have been adopted to allow change which rendered theory dynamic, structuralist models are not typically made to address larger temporal horizons. This is particularly true in economics (Gibson 2003). Transformation is related to the third hallmark of structuralist methodology, self-regulation, which refers to the internal rules of the logical system meaning that “there is no external force that causes the system to follow a determinate path” (Gibson 2003).

based sociology and the often vacuous writings of the “grand” social theorists” (such as Talcott Parsons or Niklas Luhmann). He thus seeks precision in definition, action-based, mechanism-based and realistic explanation for various social phenomena (Hedström 2005, 1-9). Although analytical sociology rightly focuses on “the mechanism-based explanation that is grounded in action theory and a ‘powerful’ conception of causality” (Wan 2011, 163), there are two important objections that might be addressed to it. First, “by stipulating that every causal explanation of social facts has to include explicit reference to individuals” (Wan 2011, 167), it denies the possibility that groups (corporations, political parties, social and cultural movements) can act as social actors as well. Collective intentional action (the “we-mode” of acting) must be taken into account as well (Searle 2006, 16). Second, by identifying action at the level of individuals only, it “eliminates structural features conceptually from the core of the mechanism directly responsible for a macro-phenomenon” (Mayntz 2004, 250).

As Bunge suggests, scientists should reject yet affirm both individualism and holism. By adopting a systemic approach they should take into consideration the whole multidimensionality and complexity of human society. This dialectical solution allows researchers to perform their analysis at different equally legitimate levels and acknowledging this simple yet fundamental fact will turn out to be of particular importance for my study of the aesthetic dimension of the urban system.

Studying Human Agency

Systemism is a scientific approach which accounts for both individual agency and social structure, postulating that “everything is either a system or a component of a system”, and according to which “every system has peculiar (emergent) properties that its components lack.” (Bunge 2000) In the lenses of systemism, society is seen as a complex supersystem composed of interrelated entities (individuals or groups) organized into systems and networks of various kinds. As Bunge writes, it allows human agency to be seen through Weber’s microscope, and structure through Marx’s telescope. Actions can belong simultaneously to a plurality of systems, so we might speak of the “nesting of the diverse types of system within one another” (Luhmann 1982, 86; see also Mingers 2003; Pickel 2007, 394).

Moreover, Bunge emphasizes the role of the environment and suggests studying the mechanisms of cooperation and the mechanisms of conflict. This allows researchers to

³ For more on recent “analytic turn” in sociological thought see Barbera (2006) or Noguera (2006).

observe both social stasis and social change. If it is correct to say that every science studies systems of some kind, the task of social sciences is to study social systems. It is important to underline the fact that there is not any single “systems theory” which explains social or spatial facts of all kinds. The systemic approach thus is not a theory to replace other theories. Hence empirical findings are essential, but not sufficient, for any systemic-based research.

Many scientists (perhaps even all natural scientists and most social scientists) adopt some kind of systemic approach in their everyday work, even if they do not explicitly declare themselves as systemists.⁴ This might be due to the fact that the term “system” has become somehow associated with concepts of strong political repute. On the other hand, those who use concepts such as “system” or “emergence” tend to do it in a vague and ambiguous manner. This allows for common misunderstandings such as equating the term system with “organic whole”, considering that a network is other than a system or denying systemism the possibility of addressing problems related to change (Bunge 1996, 265). Another difficulty, as observed by Wan, comes from the fact that researchers in the field of social theory have tended to regard the work of German social theorist Niklas Luhmann’s and in his famous work “Systemtheorie” as “the sole representative of system thinking” (2011, 3), a fact which contributed to the exclusion of a number of important approaches from scientific discussion.

Luhmann’s system’s theoretical position is that of functional structuralism. He borrowed this approach from Talcott Parson’s structural functionalism, namely, an approach to society based on its main functions. Luhmann’s functional comparative method consists of pointing “to us a huge number of possibilities, namely functional accomplishments, by means of which systems can stabilize their external borders vis-à-vis their environment” (Heikkinen, Silvonen, and Simola 1999, 255). The concept of function is meant to challenge the concept of causality and replace it with “a technique of comparing functionally equivalent alternatives” (see Verschragen 2002).

For Luhmann the cause or effect is fixed and serves as a point of reference for comparison within the field of functionally equivalent alternatives (Verschragen 2002); while function is seen as a reduction of alternatives (Schwanitz 1995, 138). This approach “explains an institution as a possible but not necessary response to a problem, as one contingent solution among several possibilities (...) And from this it follows that “the specificity of a system in the presence of (certain) universal problems lies in its decision for one against all other (functionally equivalent solutions) (Michaels 2005, 358-59).

Therefore, the functional analysis of Luhmann followers aims to demonstrate that “everything can be done otherwise, that what in social life is considered effective and familiar is a contingent outcome of processes that have a range of possible alternatives” (Turner 2009, 119). Luhmann himself writes about this constructivist-oriented view⁵ on causality in the following manner: “causality is a judgment (Urteil), an observation of an observer, a coupling of causes and effects, depending upon how the observer forms his interests, how the observer considers the effects and causes to be important or not important” (Luhmann 2002; cited in Wan 2011, 94).

Now, Luhmann’s important contribution to contemporary social theory, as Poe Yu-Ze Wan points out in his excellent work on systemism and social theory, lies in his recognition of the causal complexity of the world, which accounts for the fact that “invariant cause-effect relations”, i.e. regularity-deterministic (when A, then B) are difficult to find (Wan 2011, 115). Although one’s own knowledge and epistemic positions are essential to the very study of causality (Porpora 2007), Luhmann himself fails to stick to the end to his extreme constructivist and completely avoid realist account of causality (see Wan 2011). The more important objection concerns functionalism in general (even if Luhmann’s functional structuralism is undeniably more sophisticated than the earliest of Parson’s versions of structural functionalism).

Anthony Giddens sees three major limitations in the functionalist approach. First, he considers that functionalist authors rest “upon a false division between statics and dynamics, or between the synchronic and the diachronic”. In stressing system needs, they “have been unable to see human beings as reasoning agents who know a great deal about what they are doing in their social conduct”. The second objection concerns inadequate accounts of human action in functionalist theory, in spite of the fact that Parson labeled his approach “the action frame of reference”. The argument of Giddens is “that human agents appear in Parson’s scheme, as in that of Althusser, as ‘cultural dopes’, not as actors who are highly knowledgeable (discursively and tacitly) about the institutions they produce and reproduce in and through their actions”. (He suggests an approach that is more in line with Erving Goffman, who “treats human beings as skilled and

⁴ Structuralism, for example, employs systemic approach, although, as it has been argued in previous section, it plays down individual action.

⁵ Luhmann’s theory is, in fact, not easy to understand. The author himself described his thinking as “labyrinth-like” and claimed he was deliberately keeping his writing enigmatic to prevent it from being understood too quickly and so to prevent simplistic misunderstandings (Luhmann 1970). It therefore becomes difficult to situate him firmly in one or another epistemological school of thought. When debating with a realist, he appears more constructivist (stressing the self-referential moment of knowledge) than he appears to be when he addresses skeptical idealists (insisting on the external referential moment of knowledge) (see Christis 2001). Therefore it would be most correct to call his approach constructivist realism.

knowledgeable actors who employ their knowledgeability routinely in the production and reproduction of social encounters”). The final objection, according to Giddens, is the most decisive. He argues that social systems have no “needs” or “functional exigencies”, and he offers an illustration of his position. Functionalists often interpret Marx’s discussion of the reserve army in the capitalist economy by saying that “Capitalism has its own ‘needs’, which the system functions to fulfill. Since capitalism needs a ‘reserve army’, one comes into being”. Giddens argues that no institution has ever emerged, persisted or disappeared because a society needed it to do so. For him, institutional features of society “come about historically, as a result of concrete conditions that have to be directly analyzed; the same holds true for their persistence or their dissolution” (1987).

Thus we need a systemic approach which provides us with tools for capturing mechanisms underlying both macrosocial dynamics (and constraints) and the passage from passive agents to active actors with unique causal and imaginative powers. There are two complementary theories that I find particularly stimulating: “emergentist systemism”⁶ advocated by physicist and philosopher Mario Bunge (2000; 1982; 1996; 2006) and “dialogical systemism” (in French, *systemisme dialogique*) of geographer and urbanist Jacques Lévy (1999). Both authors advocate a complex and relational understanding of social systems and formulate mechanism-based explanations to establish links between actors and their actions at multiple levels (from a single individual to the level of world-society). As Bunge states explicitly: “the features of a social system depend upon the nature, strength, and variability of social relations, which in turn are reducible to social actions” (Bunge 1999, 311). The emphasis is thus on actors (and more particularly on urban actors in the work of Lévy) and their actions in creating, reforming and destroying human social systems. Moreover, both authors consider that social issues are multidimensional, i.e. that society is a multidimensional system in a way that each dimension undergoes the totality of levels of a society.

These dimensions hold together social systems of various kinds and we would be mistaken to assign a privileged status to any of them (biological over cultural, or economic over political). This allows us, for example, to search for an aesthetic dimension of (spatial) action or an historical dimension of aesthetic judgment. As Levy writes, “It is society taken as a whole that can explain society.” (Levy 1994, p.38). This means that when social change originates in any of the social dimensions it drags other

⁶ Some authors call Bunge’s approach an “ontological-emergentist concept of system” (Sagebiel and Vanhoefer 2006). The term emergentist systemism is used by some important exponents of Bunge’s writings such as Poe Yu-Ze Wan, Michael Klaassen and Werner Obrecht (see Wan 2011, 4).

dimensions along. The European Renaissance serves as a good example of how a dramatic social movement affects all of societal dimensions. It was a period of change in all sorts of fields. In social terms there has been the growth of cities, in the context of a great increase of population in general across the Europe. That fact already brings the great number of changes in the economic dimension. In cultural terms, there has been a growth of universities alongside the cathedral schools and a rediscovery of classical writings (which had been temporarily lost or forgotten). Politically this has been the period of increasing stability and growing strength of the state and the church and interestingly, in the legal terms, there has been the development of grand legal systems together with the recovery of the Roman law. And all of these things are happening at the same time when aesthetic sensibilities shift from Gothic to neoclassical. Of course, this did not imply abandoning all previous hierarchisation. In this sense, anyone studying a change in society always needs to identify as much as possible of relations that constitute the structure of a system in which action (and thus change) takes place, while always bearing in mind that, when it comes to human beings, we must accept never to know the totality of relations that constitute them as individuals.

Adopting Systemic Approach

Mario Bunge suggests adopting the following postulates for anyone studying the world in systemic manner: “1. Everything, whether concrete or abstract, is a system or an actual or potential component of a system; 2. Systems have systemic (emergent) features that their components lack; 3. All problems should be approached in a systemic rather than in a sectorial fashion; 4. All ideas should be put together into systems (theories); and 5. The testing on anything, whether idea or artifact, assumes the validity of other items, which are taken as benchmarks, at least for the time being.” (Bunge 2000, 149) Systemism thus favors that which is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary because the research question of the systemic approach must be connected to the totality of problems that may concern any kind of system. Bunge is quite clear on this point: “Any discipline that borrows nothing from, and gives nothing in return to, other disciplines is worthless.” (1996, 267) Now, as systemic reasoning has always been characterized by its diversity, it will be necessary to define some fundamental concepts to be used as an epistemological base in the following chapters. It would be fair enough to define the word “system” first of all.

In the fourth volume of his impressive “Treatise on Basic Philosophy”, entitled “Ontology II: A World of Systems”, Mario Bunge offers this general definition of a system: “An object is a concrete system⁷ iff it is composed of at least two different

⁷ A concrete system can be physical, biological or social.

connected things.” He offers a few simple examples: a molecule, a coral reef, a family and a factory are systems, while a set of states of a thing or a collection of events, even if ordered, are not. The simplest possible system, for Bunge, is one composed of two connected things, “a” and “b”, in an environment lumped into a single “c” (Bunge 1982, 7). It means that any two social agents (for example one actor and one object), held together by bonds of some kind in an environment, make a system. These bonds are logical in the case of a conceptual system, such as a theory; and they are material in the case of a concrete system, such as an atom, cell or immune system. Here, it is essential to recognize that humans, unlike the components that create the natural systems, are capable of a particular sort of action due to their power and capacity to make choices and create new alternatives in spite of external constraints. A number of social scientists, such as Antony Giddens or Margaret Archer, argue that humans are self-aware and reflexive (Giddens 2013; Archer 2007) which makes them entities with unique causal powers.⁸ In this sense, the influential actor-network theory advocated by a French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist of science, Bruno Latour is flawed to a certain extent by attributing intentional powers to physical objects and social networks.

At any given time a system is characterized by an ordered triple: composition, environment and structure.⁹ System, structure and processes that make the system in question work (mechanisms) are distinguished things defined in relation to one another. Notice that structure is not equal to system as some authors seem to suggest. This allows one to “alter the structure of a system without altering its mechanism, as when a state enterprise is transformed into a private company offering exactly the same product or services” (Wan 2011, 147). Moreover it is important to remember that social structures are not accessible to our senses so they must be conjectured (once conjectured, they may be visualized). In this process both ideal and material aspects of social structures must be taken into account. Families, labor unions, clubs, hospitals, firms, political parties, villages, towns, cities and world-society are all systems, whose members cooperate in

⁸ “Causes” shall not be understood in terms of events, state of affairs or variables, but as “those things, forces, powers, mechanisms or set of relations that make things happen or ‘trigger’ events” (Kurki 2007, 174).

⁹ Bunge illustrates this with the example of a health system and defines the three components in the following manner: The first component, the composition represents the collection of parts of a system at the time concerned (e.g., physicians, nurses, administrators, clerks, janitors, in-patients, out-patients). The environment is defined by the collection of things that are not in system but are connected to the different parts of system (e.g. hospital buildings, furniture, instruments, ambulances, families of the members of the system, etc). The second component, the structure is the collection of relations among the members of the system, plus the relations among them and the environmental items (e.g. relations of diagnosing and prognosticating, medications and operating, advising or otherwise acting on patients, keeping their families informed, organizing work, teaching, and supplies, keeping the wards clean, etc.) (Bunge 1996b, 270; see also Bunge 1982, 191).

some respects and compete in others – a thesis that combines, as Bunge writes, Marx’s emphasis on conflict and Durkheim’s on solidarity.

In sum, human society is a multidimensional open system of systems that is defined by environment and actions (actual and virtual) exerted by some of its components upon others. As a complex system it is enormously varied (its components can be grouped into different levels), changeable, and composed of humans and non-humans. The strongest objection we might address to the Bunge’s theory is precisely related to his over-materialistic position which overlooks the non-objectivist and imaginary dimensions of social life (see Bradford 2010, 143). His approach should therefore be supplemented by a reading of authors such as Lévy or Elias.

Emergent System Properties: More is Different

Merely specifying the composition is not sufficient to describe a system, for it has properties that none of its components have. The peculiarity of the system is that its characteristics cannot be deduced from the knowledge of its components taken separately. This is something that neo-positivists, who are advocates of a self-explanatory power of Big Data, fail to recognize. It is thus useful to clearly distinguish two types of properties possessed by any system – resultant and emergent properties.

Resultant properties are “properties of wholes that are possessed by its parts in isolation, and or in an unstructured aggregation. (...) The classic example of a resultant property is mass – the mass of a molecule, for example, is the sum of the mass of its constituent atoms.” (Elder-Vass 2005) The emergent properties, which are routinely invoked in critical realist theory, are properties of a whole that are not possessed by its parts. As Dave Elder-Vass explains, “Emergence occurs when an entity possesses one or more ‘emergent properties’. An ‘emergent property’ is one that is not possessed by any of the parts of the entity individually, nor when they are aggregated, without a structuring set of relations between them.” (Elder-Vass 2005) A classic example of emergent properties is that of the properties of water, which are very different from those of its components oxygen and hydrogen. Another example is that of color which only makes sense for bulk matter (Cohen and Stewart 2000, 232).

As one of the leading systems philosophers William C. Wimsatt argues, emergence appears to be an extremely common phenomenon. “It is the rule, rather than the exception.” (Wimsatt 2007, 304) Thus he chooses to define emergence in negative terms, i.e. as a failure of aggregativity, and proposes four criteria to be met so that a given property can be aggregative. A given property is considered emergent if it violates one or

more of the following conditions: First, the parts are intersubstitutable without affecting the system property; the system property is not a product of the way the system is organized. (It is clear that individuals can hardly meet these criteria, for the network of relationships among individuals is significant.) Second, the systemic property should remain qualitatively similar when parts are removed or added. Third, the systemic property remains unchanged under decomposition and re-aggregation of its parts. (i.e. How many members of an organisation can be added or removed in order to have a qualitative change?) Fourth, there are no cooperative or inhibitory interactions among the parts of the system – the relations between parts and whole is linear. Again, it is unlikely for individuals to have linear relationships for their relations are often cooperative or inhibitory (see Sawyer 2005, 95).

As most social properties fail to satisfy all four criteria, scientific attention should primarily be directed in recognition and analysis of various emergent phenomena. In this work I will investigate particularly urbanity and beauty as some of the most intriguing and interesting emergent phenomena of urban systems as the former belongs to its objective and the latter to its subjective realm.

The concept of emergence has had a long and controversial history. Christopher Goldspink and Robert Kay argue that it is important to recognize why emergence in social systems is fundamentally different from that found in natural systems (Goldspink and Kay 2007). They distinguish two types of emergence: non-reflexive (where the agents in the system are not self-aware) and reflexive (where the agents in the system are self-aware and linguistically capable). According to Goldspink and Kay, what distinguishes human systems from natural systems is the fact that humans are capable of coordination of their actions by means of language. Language “makes possible the emergence of domains of interaction that can themselves become the target for further linguistic distinction and hence new domains”, that further makes the social world even more complex (see Wan 2011, 79).

Hyper-complexity and the discursive dimension of human social systems have been recognized by Lévy (1999, 72), who argues furthermore that the complexity of human social systems is dialogical, i.e. dialectical and “pragmatic” at the same time. This means that the complexity of human systems is not created by actors interacting through their physical movements (like a wave “interacting” with a rock); they do it, instead, with the totality of their ideal and their material relationships with the world. Levy proposes that we comprehend societies as relational whole entities in which human actors play a fundamental role. What is essential, according to this perspective, are not only language and strategies and competences of different actors, but also the specific roles of objects or

organizations – an approach which makes systemism compatible with human historicity (often neglected in structuralist conceptions) (Lévy 1999, 398). Lévy isolates four decisive aspects of historicity: complexity, intentionality, acceleration of movement and cumulative irreversibility (Lévy 1999). An action that is opposed to these principles might be considered as anti-historical.

It is important to underline that changing scale from the individual to the societal level, or vice versa, does not decrease the level of complexity. It is rather a different complexity that emerges every time we change scale. As Philip Anderson, American physicist and Nobel laureate reminds us in his famous article “More is Different” (1972):

“At each level of complexity entirely new properties appear (...) At each stage entirely new laws, concepts, and generalizations are necessary, requiring inspiration and creativity to just as great a degree as in the previous one. Psychology is not applied biology; neither is biology applied chemistry.”

I would like to add that architecture is not applied anthropology, or even less applied ergonomics. Now, Anderson is not arguing that a change of scale implies that phenomena at a new scale may obey different fundamental laws, but rather that “the whole becomes not only more but very different from the sum of its parts.”

Robert Meyers, the editor of the massive 10,000-page Encyclopaedia of Complexity and Systems Science, defines complex systems as “systems that comprise many interacting parts with the ability to generate a new quality of collective behavior through self-organization, e.g. the spontaneous formation of temporal, spatial or functional structures. They are therefore adaptive as they evolve and may contain self-driving feedback loops. Thus, complex systems are much more than a sum of their parts. Complex systems are often characterized as having extreme sensitivity to initial conditions as well as emergent behavior that are not readily predictable or even completely deterministic. The conclusion is that a reductionist (bottom-up) approach is often an incomplete description of a phenomenon.” (Metzler, Chechkin, and Klafter 2009) Here it is important to pause for a moment to consider the notion of self-organization which has been attracting the attention of philosophers and scientists from at least as far back as the time of Descartes.

Humans and Self-organization

A sociological application of self-organization has been particularly developed by Luhmann who introduced the concept of self-referentiality in social theory (Luhmann 1984). According to Luhmann, social systems are *autopoietic*, i.e. self-referential and this self-referentiality is used by social systems to sustain the distinction between a system itself and its environment (1983, 992). Luhmann expanded the concept of autopoiesis from the biological systems theory to a general systems theory to be able to propose a new social system theory. The term autopoiesis is a pseudo Greek term that comes from *auto*, meaning “self”, and *poiesis*, meaning “creation, production”, and refers to a system capable of reproducing and maintaining itself.

It was initially coined by the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francesco Varela (1973), who defined an autopoietic system as a “machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of a process of production (transformation and destruction) of components that produces the components.” Luhmann appropriated this theory and developed his “Systemtheorie” by suggesting that social systems are not comprised of persons and actions but of communications (Luhmann 1988, 145). Social systems become networks of communication that produce further communication (and nothing but communication - if we push the point to its end). This might be one of most important pitfalls of Luhmann’s theory (Schatten and Bača 2010), for even the original authors of the concept of autopoiesis had strong reservations for Luhmann’s attempt to directly apply the concept of autopoiesis derived from natural systems to human systems. The objection of Maturana deserves to be quoted entirely:

“Just imagine for a moment a social system that is, in actual fact, functioning autopoietically. It would be an auto poetic system of the third order, itself composed of auto poetic systems of the second order. This would entail that every single process taking place within this system would necessarily be subservient to the maintenance of the autopoiesis of the whole. Consequently, the individuals with all their peculiarities and diverse forms of self-presentation vanish. They would have to subordinate themselves to the maintenance of autopoiesis. Their fate is of no further relevance. They must conform in order to preserve the identity of the system. This kind of negation of the individual is among the characteristics of totalitarian systems” (Maturana and Poerksen 2007, 72).

My theoretical attention thus will not be focused on autopoietic, self-reproducing natural-like systems suggesting that social structure might exert causal powers independently from the agency of system's components. I will agree with Wan that "the world, natural and social, is an open system that consists of things (or systems) possessing causal powers or potentialities by virtue of their intrinsic structures, which may or may not be exercised, and when exercised may or may not be actualized as a particular outcome pattern." (Wan 2011, 120)

I will insist on the theory of social organization that emphasises auto-reflexive and imaginative human agents with their interests, beliefs and commitments, and allows distinction between the mechanisms of organization in human and natural systems. Thus my gaze will primarily be on "actors with their orientations and capabilities, actor constellations, and modes of interaction." (Scharpf 1997, 39)

In society, humans, artefacts and events are separated by various distances that can have subjective or objective character. My investigation will be focused on the particular imaginative capacity of humans that make subjective distances not only possible but the constitutive element of the functioning each urban system. Since space is rooted in the separation between things (relative to the same frame of reference), I will now return to the problem of space and proceed by closely analyzing its fine structure, i.e. its scale, metrics and substance.

Space and Distance

"We have said that space is existential; we could just as well have said that existence is spatial."

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Space separates. The task of scientists is to investigate the nature of the separation between things or sets of things, i.e. to investigate the distance between the elements of what is real. There are four main views on the nature of space (and time): the container (Newton), the prime stuff (Descartes), the property of things (Berkeley) and the relational view (Leibniz). At the beginning of this chapter, I have already presented the arguments in favour of the relational view of space seen as a set of relations between factual items. In short, no things or ideas, no spatial relations and thus no space. An empty space is a *contradictio in adjecto*. Space always includes objects, being those virtual or real, ideal or material. In philosophy this view has been expounded, with various

degrees of clarity, by diverse thinkers, e.g. Leibniz, Lambert, Riemann, Schopenhauer, Engels, Mach, Whitehead, Lefebvre, Bunge, and many others. However, the relational paradigm, even when accepted as fact on a rational basis (which is certainly true in the contemporary francophone human geography), is not an easy one to conceive on a psychological basis. Einstein clearly stated this: “It required a severe struggle to arrive at the concept of independent and absolute space, indispensable for the development of theory. It required no less strenuous exertions subsequently to overcome this concept – a process which is probably by no means as yet completed.” (quoted in Jammer 1969, 117) Now, Einstein said this more than half a century ago but the authority of Newton stays with us much more than we are ready to admit. This is particularly true in biology, psychology, some of the social sciences and engineering, but in architecture as well this is the case. Some sciences, like biology or engineering, simply take space for granted. Other disciplines, like architecture, remain heavily influenced by inherited views on space which dates back to the Renaissance or even Antiquity.

Three Attributes of Space: Scale, Metrics and Substance

The question: *What is space?* cannot be fully answered without answering the following one: *What is the structure of space?* Since my investigation concerns human spaces and more in particular urban spaces, I will turn my attention to geography – a discipline involved in investigation of social spaces in general and whose object involves a spatial dimension of the social system. In the “*Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l’espace des sociétés*”, space is defined as a dimension of society corresponding to the total of relations established between different realities by a distance, each space having at least three elemental attributes: metrics, scale and substance (Lévy 2013, 353). Each attribute of space is dependent upon the other two, but as Lévy argued (1994, p.49), it is useful to dissociate them for better understanding of the essential features of space.

In general terms, scale is the interval representing degrees of a property. Sometimes we express it in quantitative concepts which are numeric or mathematical in nature (numerical quantification) and sometimes in class or qualitative concepts, such as satisfaction or happiness. When one adopts a relational and systemic approach, their understanding of scale must follow. This means that when degrees of a property change, this entails change on the content as well. A big city is not only bigger but also different than a small city, and it is important to say that the “bigness” of a city (as any other property of a system) can be represented in different ways. In fact, it might be said that there are infinite ways of measuring a property of a system and an infinite number of scales to express its qualities. Everything depends on what one measures and how they measure it. What is measured is important because two different things are not big in the

same way. A big city and a big house are not big in the same way. How one measures, on the other hand, depends on whether their measuring tools belong to economic, political, sociological, historical or some other dimension. Geneva, for example, is a small city in terms of a number of inhabitants, a big one in terms of economic or political impact. Everything depends upon the question asked.

When dealing with space we deal with distances. Scale matters for it brings forward size-relations between different realities. However, switching over to one or another order of grandeur cannot be defined by any a priori criteria. The systematic approach makes it both challenging and essential to identify a threshold values for any scale. If a researcher is dealing with complex questions such as the size of a city or the proximity of a particular urban space, Cartesian reduction of the entire variety of realities to extension and shape only, will not help us much. One of the great failures of the Modern Movement lies precisely in the pervasive ignorance of scale by modernist architects and urban planners who treated the city as if it was a house, only bigger. They failed to recognize that when we transgress a threshold between a house and a city we change order from private space to societal space – which requires a totally different approach when it comes to spatial planning and spatial action (see Lévy 2013). The task of finding an appropriate scale threshold can be accomplished neither by the Euclidian geometry only, for meters and square-meters tell us little when it comes to the question of distances between humans. This means that scale is not an auto-referential notion (Berque 2000) as it happens to be directly dependent on two other spatial attributes, metrics and substance.

The notion of metrics has its origin in the Greek word *metron*, meaning both the measure itself and that by which anything is measured (an instrument). In western geography the notion of metrics has been taken for granted for a long time, topographical metrics (Euclidian measure) having been employed almost exclusively when measuring distances. Today, due to the expansion of spatial theory to topological and subjective spaces, the notion of metrics has been expanded to such a degree that there is not any a priori distance, but rather distances that we can measure and overcome in various ways.

In addition, choosing one mode over another for treating distances often means choosing between two opposing lifestyles, e.g. choosing a lifestyle practiced in the center of a dense city often implies a willingness to use public transportation and pedestrian metrics; while the choice of a suburban lifestyle is closely associated with a strong dependence on a car. This means that individuals' managing of distances is not innocent and implies a number

of political or ethical decisions. As we shall see later, this choice is strongly influenced by an aesthetic component as well.

Lévy defines substance as a non-spatial component of a spatial configuration (1994 p.49). Spatial substance is an answer to a vaguely formulated question of the world itself. Substance implies that the space is always the space of something. As the last attribute of the spatial triad, substance could simply be described as an adjective we use to determine a type of a space in question (e.g. urban space, political space, genealogical space). This is why a relational theory of space is sometimes called adjectival. For example, urban space (or urban space-time, if we want to add the element of time as a succession of events) is the basic structure of the totality of possible urban-related facts, scientific space as the basic structure of the totality of possible science-related facts, etc. As a matter of fact, a recognition of a spatial substance is crucial for being able to (inter)act in society.

It is a well known fact that young children relate everything with everything (Piaget 1971). From the very early age, children are trained by other humans to learn and recognise an incredible number of spatial substances, a knowledge without which the societal objects would have no meaning. By creating roles in play children test different spatial substances which is “their first step on the road not just to Oz but also toward inhabiting human institutional reality” (Tomasello 2008). In this sense, substance is not an isolated fact but an entry point which allows scientists to investigate all dimensions of society with the spatial point of view.

In 2017 a Danish TV network commercial entitled “All that we share” (“Alt Det Vi Deler”) went viral for its touching message about humanity. While the commercial celebrates the concept of a modern diverse society, it is also an exceptional exercise in spatial substance. The commercial begins by inviting 80 individuals from all walks of life to place themselves inside the ten squares that were previously drawn on the ground. In one square was a group of medical workers, in another a group of business people, then a group of people from the countryside and after a group of those who have never seen a cow, and so on. Thus each group was constituted by one spatial substance that was previously defined as a relevant. Once all the squares were occupied, the narrator started to ask questions: Who in this room was the class clown? Who are step parents? Who are those who have been bullied and those who have bullied others? Who are the brokenhearted and those who are madly in love? Those who feel lonely and those who are bisexual? As the questions continued, the individuals displaced themselves by forming new clusters each time the new question was asked. These clusters are precisely the newly formed spaces defined by a substance that was considered as relevant (which also implies that other substances were suspended as irrelevant in the given moment). The message is

that what we share is precisely our common spaces, and that the categories of “us” and “them” are primarily spatial categories.

It is important to underline here that complex spaces (as with the case of most of human spaces) have various scales, metrics and substances. As distance appears to be fundamental for understanding the nature of space, and consequently, affects the human being in the world, I will turn my attention to the problem of distance in the following section.

Distance as a Keyword

Distance represents the absence of contact (or a degree of separation) between different components of a system. Thus any analysis of a system, including human social systems, must include the analysis of distances between components of a system. This is given that there is no interaction at a distance only a distance relevant to the issue in question. In “L’espace légitime”, which is written as a series of scientific and philosophical propositions, Jacques Lévy offered a new approach to spatial theory in geography by putting distance at the center of problems raised by societies. In the in the twenty-second proposition, he writes in the following manner:

“Space is a problem for societies insofar as a distance exists between social objects. This distance is in contradiction with the maximization of social interaction.” (p.48, translated from French)

Distance appears as a key notion in social sciences of space, for interaction between components of a social system becomes a necessary condition for the very existence of society. It is essential to recognize that any measurement of distances cannot be done in isolation from the theories that make such measurements possible. In the chapter “Space, Time and Knowledge”, I have argued how adopting a certain conception of space always comes with heavy consequences for the rest of theoretical knowledge. This statement shows its full relevance for anyone interested in measuring distances. If one adopt the Newtonian approach (the absolute space paradigm), they remain strongly limited by the uniformity of the Euclidian geometry, which imposes equal metrics at any point.

The relational paradigm gives both the observer and the things themselves an active rather than a passive position in the constitution of space – itself now considered as dynamic rather than static. This opens up a wide range of new possibilities to sciences interested in the spatial dimension of the social. Geography, for example, which has been

a self-imprisoned science of territories, could expand its scope to study various networks and rhizomes.

Through the notion of metrics, distance appears in the center of any spatial analysis. Take, for example, a person living next to the border of a country having high passport-restrictions. Even if the territory of a bordering state may seem close in Euclidian terms, it becomes extremely distant if measured by political or economically driven metrics. And this distance is objective even though not material. For the underprivileged individual in question, it is as if someone has constructed a wall between his country and a bordering country. Thus any opposition between physical space and social space should be rejected. In the course of history, various ways of managing distances have been combined in a mixture of competition and cooperation, which Beaudé calls cooptation (2009, 105). They often coexist but are not equally distributed among individuals and their societies.

If contact makes interaction possible between the two realities, and if distance is an obstacle to this interaction, we might ask ourselves what are the conditions that make distance irrelevant? Geography has found an answer to this question in the concept of place, which some geographers have elevated to nothing less than the condition of human experience (Entrikin 1991, 1).

Place as a Distance Made Irrelevant

Place (fr. *lieu*) is a central concept in geography in general, and particularly in humanistic geography. The concept of place has evolved together with the evolution of geographical thought from pre-Darwian naturalism (expressed in the possibilisme of Vidal la Blanche, father of modern French geography) towards an idea that humans act upon their environment in a way that allows them to detach their own evolution from that of nature.

Restricted to *milieu* during the first half of twentieth century, the concept of place could finally become liberated from the confines of soil and territory by a theoretical turn upheld by various researchers and re-assembled by the name “humanistic geography”, a term which designates an intellectual movement that took place around 1970. By taking into account the human actor and human experience, humanistic geography was finally able to move forward from the naturalistic, deterministic and positivistic aspiration of the preceding period.

This important theoretical shift did not happen outside of social and societal movements in general. It followed a change in individuals' relationship to the world, which emerged with modernity, having for consequence the weakening of local communities and the emergence of a global society of individuals. To explain the mechanisms behind this process that has no precedent in human history, geography and as well as other social sciences, had to change completely its way of understanding the world at large which, among other things, necessitated adoption of a relational i.e. dynamic understanding of space.

This implied a shift from the understanding of place as a thing-in-itself, i.e. a delimited portion of territory which could be measured by the help of Euclidian geometry, to the understanding of place as an order of things whose mediation is in perpetual reconfiguration (see Beaudé 2015; Berque 2000, 555; Santos 1997; Lévy 1996; Retaillé 1996, 95). Space has changed its scientific status progressively from that of a constraint to that of a liberty (Lévy 1996, 51). Milton Santos, who was one of leading figures to give fresh life to French and South American geography from 1975 to 2000, argued for the importance of place in the constitution of space and society. He therefore defines the importance of place in the following manner: "It's place that offers the world's movement the greatest possibility for its most efficient realization. To become space the world depends on the virtual nature of place." (Translated from French, Santos 1997, 242).

Here Santos speaks the language of Leibniz and we should remind ourselves of the discussion in the section "Newton versus Leibniz". As for Leibniz, the third (and final) step in space formation is to consider all places together. (What is perhaps missing in the theory of Leibniz is precisely the fact that he does not give sufficient attention to the importance of place.) Now, it is essential to recognize that place itself is a space – only a kind of space where "distance is considered non-relevant" (Lévy 2013, 612). This elegant and powerful definition, proposed by Lévy, allows us to consider place formation as a necessary condition of experience itself. Here again metrics and substance are of fundamental importance, for without them all places would be the same. A restaurant is considered to be a place since we might expect to be served by a waiter without paying attention to the table we choose. In the same way an amphitheater, a train, a city, a mountain – and finally even the world – can all be considered as places, depending on the scale, metrics and substance in question. Thus a place is not purely and simply the distance denied, but rather always the distance denied from a certain point of view. We might even say that every space could become place depending on the type of phenomenon we consider to be relevant. To experience a world, a world must become a space where distance is not relevant. It must become a place.

Spatiality As an Action that Produces Space

Space cannot be defined without being a space *of* something. To spatialise things means to establish relationships between them, which would allow action to take place. This action is called spatiality. Space, spatialization and spatiality are elements of the same process. Space proceeds from spatiality while at the same time it offers a context (structure) that allows one or another style of spatiality. Human agents, as components of urban systems, mobilize their various spatial competences to achieve their goals (e.g. assure mobility to go to work or school, renovate an apartment, establish social relations with other members of society, etc.). Each of these goals implies heavy consequences to the totality of the urban space in question (e.g. to live in a single-family house in a peri-urban area necessitates various spatial arrangements that make the practice of this particular lifestyle possible). A style of spatiality (Lévy 2013, 950; Lussault 2007) thus represents a way of making do with space (Certeau 1990).

Human agency, the capacity of each individual or group of individuals to act upon, is thus defined by space and spatiality. This is why we may say that human experience, i.e. human existence, is spatial. Space and spatiality, as essential notions for all science studying the spatial dimension of human societies, represent the base upon which we may construct and develop other fundamental concepts, such as the concept of inhabiting, urbanization, boundaries, territories, networks etc.

Inhabitants always see their immediate environment in relation to themselves, as the objective part of their style of spatiality in which their humanity may be either denied or confirmed. The aesthetic experience assumes an importance for its potential to activate the agency of urban actors, and fundamentally influences our actions towards the urban environment. This is why I will turn my attention to the aesthetic dimension of society and explore how the subjective realm of the aesthetic has proved itself able to generate conditions that lead to action, and consequently influence other dimensions of society, especially the realm of the objective, i.e. what is ethical, political or legal.



Fig. 2 – La Clairvoyance, René Magritte, 1936 © 2017, ProLitteris, Zurich

2 The Aesthetic Dimension of Society

“Croire qu'il suffit d'ouvrir les yeux pour posséder le monde comme représentation est une erreur. C'est le présupposé général selon lequel il suffit d'ouvrir les portes de nos sens pour posséder le monde de manière sensible et que l'activité intellectuelle commence seulement lorsqu'il s'agit de parvenir à une activité conceptuelle.”

Konrad Fiedler

In his 2007 essay entitled “In Search of Aesthetics”, Roger Scruton argued that many recent studies in the field of aesthetics have been rather futile. A huge amount of time and energy has been consumed in a constant struggle to define and redefine art, to decide whether found objects are works of art, whether John Cage’s 4’33” is a work of music, whether copies are versions or new works, and so on and so on. Scruton might be too strong in his judgment but he is right to say that such questions do not cast any light on why works of art are significant to humans, and what kind of significance they carry for human actions (2007, 238). It might be argued that the reason why research in the field of aesthetics is not progressing lies in the fact that many researchers tend to consider aesthetics as a synonym of the artistic and thus they limit their study to works of art. In this thesis, I will take the position that everyday experiences are replete with aesthetic character, to the extent that any real situation of consciousness in the world is imbued with the aesthetic. From the earliest stages of human history, a specific form of imaginative consciousness developed in which the aesthetic relations of man to reality were established and developed. This is why I argue that the aesthetic dimension runs through our entire society and is strongly and inseparably interconnected to the other dimensions of society that hold it together as a system. Studying aesthetic concepts and the aesthetic experience is important for they open up particular aspects of human existence to which scientists wouldn’t otherwise have access.

Art versus Aesthetics

The theory of aesthetic appreciation has often identified aesthetic objects as being separate from human experience. One of the reasons for this misunderstanding may be related to the Western philosophical study of aesthetics, which focused, with some noteworthy exceptions, almost exclusively on the study of art. As a consequence, aesthetics became the affair of art critics or aestheticians, something to be discussed by the “experts in taste”. The shortcoming of any aesthetic theory that neglects human experience was famously discussed by John Dewey in “Art as Experience” (2005), a work that is regarded by many as one of the most important contributions to the aesthetic theory in the 20th century. As a leading proponent of American pragmatism, Dewey argued that the task of aesthetics consists in examining the construction of beauty from the standpoint of a certain “situation”, which is not a purely mental act, separate from action. Art is a medium which is able to communicate the artist’s experience with the world, the works of art being the gateways to the lived experience of the painter or writer. In this view, art involves an experience related to a particular material object and thus both the artist and the observer actively encounter each other and their environment through the expressive object that we name “the work of art”. Consequently, aesthetic concepts lose their objective significance and the accent is shifted to the space of human representation. This important shift later allowed Nelson Goodman to propose that we replace the question “what is art?” with the question “when is art?” (Goodman 1978, 70). In the following paragraphs, we will reveal some of the reasons for the apparent blindness of many researchers with regards to the existence of aesthetic experiences that could take place outside of fine art museums.

The Aesthetic is Other Than the Artistic

The discussion around the idea of a distinctively aesthetic state of mind (as being the very concept of the aesthetic) has a long history. It seems to be a highly versatile notion and remains a matter of ongoing controversy (Carroll 2001). The issue has been addressed by a variety of thinkers. Examples include Schopenhauer’s insistence on a pure will-less contemplation as a necessary condition for the appreciation of the beautiful and the sublime, Kant’s discussion on the disinterested character of aesthetic contemplation, or Friedrich Schiller, who considered the aesthetic state of mind as a disposition of the mind which contains in itself the whole of humanity (precisely because it takes no individual function of humanity exclusively under protection, it is favorable to all). In

opposition to this, certain thinkers of both analytical and continental philosophy, like George Dickie, considered that a state of mind that is specifically aesthetic is an empty notion, i.e., a myth (Dickie 1964). For Dickie, the only thing that distinguishes the aesthetic domain from some other human activity is the particular object of its attention, i.e., the work of art. This latter position became dominant among philosophers who wrote on the subject of aesthetics in the XXth century.¹⁰ A dilemma thus emerges: Should we first investigate a kind of attitude or mode of observing things that is distinctively aesthetic and then extend it to the subject of art, or should we first discuss the notion of art and from this derive a theory of the aesthetic?

I argue that there exists a mode of observing the world that is distinctively aesthetic which, in turn, cannot be “bracketed” or studied in isolation. A particular aesthetic state of mind (as it may be the case with most of our mental states) is intentional, i.e., directed outwards from subject to object.¹¹ This position follows the theory of aesthetic appreciation developed by the British philosopher Roger Scruton, who reminds us that “it is impossible to describe or understand a mental state in isolation from its object: it might be said that the object, or at least a certain conception of the object, is of the essence of a mental state” (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 73). In this sense, a theory of the aesthetic appreciation of the urban environment cannot stop short of giving a theory of its proper object and consequently is intricately related to urban theory in a larger sense. In addition, cognitive psychology has demonstrated that the aesthetic experience is just as mediated by language and socially situated as any other conscious human activity (see Schaeffer 2015). The same applies to art, whose scope cannot be solely reduced to aesthetic appreciation.¹² There are other dimensions of society (economic, cultural, political, etc.) that are equally important in the activities of making and appreciating art. In short, I suggest that the aesthetic should not be conceived as an overarching concept that includes all artistic value and its potential for action, nor should the artistic be conceived as a synonym of the aesthetic.

It is equally important to underline that when researchers speak of human mental capacities, we should not assume that these processes are divided into neatly separable compartments that can exist autonomously. Multiple studies in the fields of psychology

¹⁰ One of the reasons for this may lie in apparent distrust among some XX century philosophers in regard to the notion of “experience” (in the sense of “lived experience”), merely for their association of the notion of experience to different forms of “psychologism” (see Schaeffer 2015, 30).

¹¹ The question of intentionality has been discussed previously, in the chapter “Collective and Individual Action”.

¹² Otherwise, we would be tempted to agree with Bartett Newmann, the abstract color-field painter, when he said: “Aesthetics is for me like ornithology must be for the birds” (Newman and O’Neill 1992, 304).

and economy, for example, have demonstrated that emotions are a necessary condition for correct reasoning. Thus, when I speak of different categories of mind (thought, feeling, will) I do it rather “to understand the fundamental powers of the mind: not what mind is, but what it can do” (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 7:106). This holistic understanding of the human mind allows me to consider the aesthetic state of mind as a particular mode of experience, without supporting the idea that some cognitive or affective resources are exclusively aesthetic. With this being clarified, I can proceed with a closer investigation of the character and specificity of the aesthetic experience. Thus, to approach the problem of aesthetics, I will begin by using a theory of the aesthetic state of mind, and not by using a theory of art.

Art as Experience

“Art as Experience” was published in 1934, only two years before Walter Benjamin published his seminal essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. Although different in nature, these two texts share the same criticism towards the doctrine of art for art's sake (*l'art pour l'art*) — an idea that art constituted a separate closed world devoid of any ethical, social or cognitive purpose and that teaches us nothing about life or society's values. This idea emerged with modernism and the unprecedented mobility of trades and population, which “destroyed the connection between works of art and the genius loci of which they were the natural expression. As works of art [...] lost their indigenous status, they [...] acquired a new one — that of being specimens of fine art and nothing else” (Dewey 2005, 8). This movement, which appeared at the end of the 19th century, was later replaced by another paradigm of Western culture — the “avant-garde”, which gradually became an umbrella term for art pervaded by political, social, and aesthetic radicalism. The avant-gardists saw themselves literally as the guardians of society, whose role was to lead radical social progress. This movement, which emerged in the modern metropolis, was trying to provide some answers to the basic questions that Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) asked in the title of one of his last paintings (1897–1898): Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?

One of the missions of avant-garde artists and thinkers was to give back the human dimension to art, that is, to reconnect art with life. However, as Jean-Marie Schaeffer observes, their attempt came with a paradox. The life they had in mind was not that of the experience of observers. Rather it was its opposite, for lived life was considered to be “alienated”, “inauthentic”, “wrong”, while the life of art was “the real life” that was being betrayed (2015, 23-24). In this sense, the role of art was to announce the arrival of another life and of the new man, or “l'homme nouveau”, to use the exact term of

Mondrian (see Michaud 1997, 58). In this sense, the experience of avant-garde art necessitated a break from the lived experience of contemporary people. In this sense, avant-garde art shared the same conviction as the paradigm of art for art's sake — a separation between art and life, between art and common experience. In opposition to this, Dewey's argument was directed directly against this understanding of the human condition and Dewey argued that the only anchor for aesthetic experience was the lived experience of individuals. If this is the case, it is essential to clarify what he meant when he spoke of aesthetic experience. This explanation will also help us make a fundamental distinction between two terms that some thinkers seem to wrongly consider as being synonymous: the artistic and the aesthetic.

The Aesthetic

In “The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics”, Jerold Levinson defines aesthetics as “the branch of philosophy devoted to the conceptual and theoretical inquiry into art and aesthetic experience” (Levinson 2003, 3). He then isolates three foci of philosophical inquiry in the field. One focus involves “a certain kind of *practice* or *activity* or *object*” related to the domain of aesthetics. A second focus involves “a certain *property*, *feature*, or *aspect* of things” that can be called aesthetic. The list spans a great range of properties and seems endless: beauty, ugliness, sublimity, grace, elegance, delicacy, harmony, unity, serenity, coolness, tragicalness, awkwardness, etc. (The difficulty of this open-textured vocabulary is two-fold: in that it isolates a shared set of terms that would be genuinely aesthetic, and in the fact that terms such as “beautiful” are mediated by language and history, which allows their usage in all kind of contexts.) Levinson's third focus involves a certain kind of *attitude*, *perception*, or *experience* that could be labeled aesthetic. My study will be concerned with all three aspects, for it is only in the understanding of the intimate relations between the object, its properties and a person's experience of it that I can make progress in better understanding the aesthetic phenomenon. I argue that the relational space paradigm will allow us to perform such an analysis.

Gary Iseminger isolates four aims for those who study a distinctively aesthetic state of mind: (i) giving an account of what distinguishes an aesthetic state of mind from other states of minds, that are like it in some ways, such as sensual pleasure or drug-induced experiences; (ii) giving an account in a way that appeals neither to any prior idea of aesthetic, nor to the concept of art; (iii) explaining ideas related to the distinctively aesthetic, e.g., ideas on the aesthetic properties, qualities, aspects, or concepts, of the aesthetic object, of the aesthetic judgment, and of aesthetic value, in terms of the idea of

the distinctively aesthetic state of mind; and (iv) defending a certain connection between the realm of the aesthetic thereby explained, and the realm of art, while recognizing that the aesthetic state of mind may appropriately be directed towards, or grounded in, non-art (Levinson 2003, 99-100).

The Origin of Aesthetics

Contemporary understandings of the aesthetic dimension of human experience are all informed by complex intellectual and philosophical debates going back at least to the Age of Enlightenment. There are many fundamental questions related to the notion of aesthetics: What is beauty and is it powerful in motivating people? What is the connection between ethics and aesthetics? Does beauty exist independently of human experience or is it a product of the mind? The great Cartesian break separated nature from the mind, and paved the way towards a subjectivist view¹³ of the aesthetic quality. Humans were finally able to appreciate the role of their own subjective feelings in determining the aesthetic properties of objects, so the great novelty of the Cartesian break was that it displaced the notion of the beautiful from the field of metaphysics towards a new science called Aesthetics. Thus, aesthetics as a discipline was born at the same time as the recognition of the human individual as being a modern reflective subject. This is why some thinkers, such as Pierre Bourdieu and Terry Eagleton, tried to represent the invention of the concept of aesthetics as a means of pursuing certain economic and political activities in the interest of the dominant bourgeois class (Bourdieu 2013; Eagleton 1991). For them, the domain of aesthetics emerged only under certain historical conditions and thus has no universal character as an essential part of human mental equipment.

Until the 18th century, the focus of philosophical inquiry was the concept of beauty. In about 1750, the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten formulated the term

¹³ Two major paradigms were developed over the course of time: the objectivist paradigm and the subjectivist paradigm. Classical philosophers regarded aesthetic qualities as inherent in objects (the objectivist approach). Plato argued that objects “are always beautiful in their very nature” and he considered order and proportion as essential elements of beauty. He also influenced the link between beauty and morality. Christian philosophers (Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventure) saw beauty as an expression of God and thus inherent in the object — in this case, beauty was related to religion. Beauty was evidence that the Earth was divinely created. The Renaissance emerged through the classical influence of ancient Greece and Rome. Thus classical characteristics were essential for the conception of beauty at the time. Leon Battista Alberti in his famous work “On the Art of Building in Ten Books” argued for aesthetic absolutism and considered beauty to reside “in a reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse” (VI, 2). Beauty was not a subjective question — it was entirely a rational matter.

aesthetics by referring to the Greek *aesthesis*.¹⁴ His goal was to establish a new philosophical discipline by opposing it to that of logic. As an attempt to introduce sensations in the rationalist post-Cartesian philosophy, Baumgarten formed a definition of the term as follows:

“Aesthetics (the theory of liberal arts, lower gnoseology, the art of beautiful thinking, the art of the analogue of reason) is the science of sensitive cognition” (Baumgarten 1986, 1.).

Baumgarten used the term to describe cognition that mediates between the generalities of reason and the particulars of sense: According to him, the aesthetic is the realm of existence that partakes in the perfections of reason, but in a ‘confused’ mode (Eagleton 1991, 15). He understood aesthetic judgments as a judgments of cognition that are not yet fully developed. For him, taste is the ability to judge perfections and imperfections sensibly rather than intellectually, and some contemporary scholars still insist on using Baumgarten’s definition of aesthetics and approach aesthetics as a problem raised by the human senses. Yet, right from the start, Baumgarten’s theory was criticized as being inaccurate on philosophical as well as etymological grounds. Kant expressed his criticism in the following words: “Those who, like Baumgarten, make taste a confused knowledge of perfection, do not stick to the concerns of aesthetics. For the mere fact of confusion on our knowledge has nothing to do with its reference to pleasing form. (...) Clearness of knowledge differs from confusion only quantitatively, and is the result of more concentration of attention. Therefore a position on this quantitative scale cannot constitute the distinguishing tribute of a kind of judgment” (Gilbert and Kuhn 1939, 324). However, Baumgarten’s work created a space where Kant’s aesthetic theory could be developed — the fundamental work that has shaped our view of beauty to this day.

The Kantian Method

Aesthetics as a discipline appeared when the human was recognised as a modern subject. According to Bernstein, modernity was announced by the Kantian separation of the domains of truth, morality and beauty (1992). Between 1781 and 1790, Kant published his three fundamental works: “Critique of Pure Reason”, “Critique of Practical Reason” and “Critique of Judgment”, with the aim of answering this question: What does it mean to be human? He regarded humans as having three modes of consciousness: knowledge, desire and feeling. The last Critique, concerned with feeling, contains his ideas on

¹⁴ The perception of the external world by the senses. Etymology: ancient Greek *αἴσθησις* sense perception, sensation, perception (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014).

aesthetics, which he saw as “a bridge between theoretical and practical reason, causality and freedom, nature and morality, which he held to be separated by an abyss” (Gasché 2003, 7). What preceded his philosophy were important advances in the aesthetics of nature, written mainly by English empirical philosophers: John Locke, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Frances Hutcheson, Joseph Addison, David Hume and Edmund Burke.

Kant argued that the judgment of beauty are like cognitive judgments yet different from any act of cognition. He famously isolated two fundamental conditions for a judgment to be a judgment of taste: subjectivity and universality.¹⁵ Aesthetic judgments are neither objective universal claims such as “this is a tree”, nor subjective particular claims such as “I like root beer”. “Rather the claim that Da Vinci's Last Supper is beautiful is a subjective universal claim, a claim on our common humanity and not purely a psychological claim of preference” (Valle, 2009, p.264). His arguments is that everyone should be able to experience whatever each of us feel in the aesthetic experience. Kant describes the universal validity of aesthetic judgment as follows:

“(…) when [a man] puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others. He judges not merely for himself, but for all men, and then speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Thus he says that the thing is beautiful; and it is not as if he counts on others agreeing with him in his judgment of liking owing to his having found them in such agreement on a number of occasions, but he demands this agreement of them. He blames them if they judge differently, and denies them taste, which he still requires of them as something they ought to have; and to this extent it is not open to men to say: Every one has his own taste. This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing as taste, i.e. no aesthetic judgment capable of making a rightful claim upon the assent of all men.” (Kant 2007 [1790], p.52)

The aim of Kant was not to establish conceptual rules for the beautiful. Instead, he performed an inquiry into the necessary conditions of aesthetic judgment in general. He introduces the notion of the “free play of faculties”, as an attempt to reconcile subjectivity and universality. He claims that each of us is capable of engaging in the unconstrained coordination of imagination and understanding. To him, the pure judgment of taste come up when our imagination and understanding are employed in

¹⁵ Kant's idea that in a judgment of taste, individuals demand or require agreement from others is important for my intention to demonstrate the consequence of this aspiration to our ethical judgments as regards to inhabited environments in general.

such a way that they do not follow any rules. The subject becomes literally “free”. The peculiarity of Kant’s aesthetics is that he considered the ability to aesthetically judge objects not primarily as a product of socio-historical conditions, but rather as inherent to human nature. In other words, he assumed that the ability to judge things as beautiful or sublime is a miracle of nature. Consequently, Kant was exclusively interested in the aesthetics of nature, for he considered the aesthetic judgment to be pure only when the mind is confronted with objects that are still cognitively unmastered, such as a wild flower, or objects such as the wild ocean, that are seemingly beyond our control. This position led him to conclude that aesthetic judgments are “free from concepts” and exercised in a mode of attention that he famously named “disinterested interest”. This disinterestedness is expressed as regard to our practical concerns, i.e. historical and societal conditions which determine the properties of objects of our aesthetic interest. In order to engage in a pure contemplation of the beauty, the subject must put aside any concepts, motivations or purposes that they might have. In his view, when human beings are able to agree that a certain phenomenon is beautiful or sublime, we exercise a particular form of intersubjectivity in a kind of ahistorical and trans-cultural manner.

However, Kant’s attempt to avoid historicity by focusing his attention on the concept of nature was quite unfortunate. Indeed, the concept of nature itself is a social construct (see Rolston 1997) and so is the very idea of natural beauty, which appeared, it might be argued, sometime during the Enlightenment. In this sense, Kant’s idea of beauty is a product of its time in the same way as the theories of classical Greek or Christian philosophers. Exactly what should be done with the historical dimension of aesthetic judgment is a difficult question and there have been numerous attempts to bypass the historical issue.¹⁶ Recently, several new approaches have emerged following the rising interest in human cognition. The idea behind these approaches is to explain and understand the aesthetic experience at the neurological level (ex. Chatterjee 2013). Nevertheless, the argument of historicity “constantly returns in aesthetics, often changing shape and emphasis, but always challenging us to find that trans-historical perspective whose possibility it denies” (Scruton 2007, 236; see also Gadamer and Bernasconi 1986).

There is a difference between the contemporary critical method and the Kantian method. Instead of searching for formal structures with universal value,¹⁷ the task of critical theory

¹⁶ In the 1980s and 1990s, different behaviorist theories were very popular. They were based on the idea that (aesthetic) reactions to different structural or qualitative components of an environment developed alongside humans, and that these reactions are related to our basic biological needs. The most discussed theories are the prospect-refuge theory by Appleton (1996) and the framework of prediction of preference by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989; 1987).

¹⁷ What came after Kant was the century of Romanticism, which emphasized emotion above classical order. It was a reaction to the rationalism and classicism of previous centuries, and a

was to conduct historical and social investigations into the particular mechanisms that led humans to constitute themselves and to recognize themselves as subjects with distinct knowledge, desires and feelings. I will attempt to make a compromise between these two methods by both embracing Kant's determination to describe the underlying mental process that allows us to be involved in the aesthetic experience, and by investigating the particular social, historical and, most of all, spatial conditions which give particular character to this experience. Aesthetic dimension is totally depended on learned forms of knowledge, but it must be underlined that this learning process is only possible because humans are biologically equipped for it. On the other side, the aesthetic structure remains dormant unless it is awakened by the interaction with other persons. What is new and original with Kant's famous method is that it consisted in isolating a particular mental state that would justify the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline, and allowed us to study the aesthetic experience as one of the fundamental (and not accidental) features of the human condition. However, I will agree with Scruton in saying that "the division between practical reason and aesthetic understanding is in fact untenable, and that until the relation between the two is reestablished, they must both remain impoverished" (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 7:1).

Imagination

To see a part of an inhabited environment as a city or a village is not like seeing it as a group of buildings or houses. To discriminate between different dwellings, humans need information; but for information to be useful, we must organize it (i.e., spatialise it!). This organization is provided by acts of synthesis. The first philosopher who placed a strong emphasis on this truth was Kant. As he put it in one of his most famous passages in *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Concepts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind". Experience requires both percepts and concepts and thus experience and interpretation are inseparable. According to Kant, the faculty through which sensation and concept are united is imagination, and he found precisely the same faculty at work in aesthetic judgment. He considered that, in normal perception, the imagination is bound by the rules of understanding, while in the aesthetic mode, it is

bridge to the expressionism of the twentieth century. The writings of noteworthy authors had a particularly profound effect on Western thought: Rousseau (as a forerunner of the Romanticism), Goethe, Byron and Wordsworth looked towards the countryside as a place where man could understand himself and become fulfilled. They described their love of romantic landscapes in glowing terms and created images that strongly shaped the mindset of their readers — images that strongly resonated, even up until now. Most importantly, romanticism viewed landscapes in purely objectivist terms — that is, according to them, landscapes contained intrinsic qualities (Lothian 1999). In the nineteenth and twentieth century, philosophers returned to subjectivist approaches to aesthetics. The most commonly regarded works of these subjectivist approaches are those of George Santayana, Benedetto Croce, John Dewey and Susanne Langer.

“free” of concepts (see Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 7:75-77). However, by considering it present in every act of perception and every cognitive state, Kant did not recognize the specificity of imagination as a particular mode of attention.

Imagination has been an object of study at least since the time of the early Greek philosophers, and one of the central concepts in the philosophy of Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Husserl, and Sartre (see Kind 2016, 13-82). From the beginning of the Enlightenment, imagination has been the ruling concept in the aesthetic theory and was studied not only in aesthetics but in the theory of knowledge as well. Today, it is one of the most interesting fields in psychology and cognitive science. The position of Kant (and Hume) did not differ much from a definition of imagination recently offered by Etienne Pelaprat and Michael Cole, psychologists who consider imagination as a “process of resolving and connecting the fragmented, poorly coordinated experience of the world so as to bring about a stable image of the world”. Imagination thus becomes a “process of image making that resolves ‘gaps’ arising from biological and cultural-historical constraints, and that enables ongoing time-space coordination necessary for thought and action”. Thus it is an “active process of resolving temporally and spatially dis-coordinated sources of experience”, which is fundamental for the constitution of human thought (2011).

Consequently, imagination becomes central to human cognitive process since human beings are perpetually engaged in a process of image formation. This image of the world is generated by the permanent contact with others, which in turn extends the reach of our social action. The Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose work has recently been rediscovered, indicated that this extension of experience is possible precisely thanks to imagination. Imagination is “the means by which a person’s experience is broadened, because he can imagine what he has not seen (and) can conceptualize something from another person’s narration and description of what he himself has never directly experienced” (Vygotsky 2004, 17). As “a form of expansion of human experience” (Zittoun and Cerchia 2013), it is the process that makes possible for an individual to emerge as such, under particular social and spatial conditions. Imagination enables humans to consider alternatives to reality, as Harris showed in his study with children (Harris 2007, 39). This enlarged understanding of imagination does not only understand it as a means by which we “fill the gaps” of our fragmented experience but also as a capacity that feeds “cognitive and affective processes, brings us to anticipate, predict and react to situations to which we have not been confronted; consider various possible consequences to past or future events; and consider the possible causes of a given event”. In that sense, as Zittoun and Cerchia argue, it supports our causal understanding of reality (Zittoun and Cerchia 2013, 313).

Imagination is a modality of apprehending the world that operates in the virtual domain of human experience¹⁸, and as Vygotsky proposed, it consists in taking “distance – more or less consciously, more or less reflexively – from one’s awareness of the unfolding reality”. Now the question is: What is the nature of this “distance”, of this particular mental process and why is it essential for understanding the problems raised by aesthetics? To provide an answer to this question, I will start from Jean-Paul Sartre’s early work “The Imaginary”, which is one the most detailed account of the nature of imagination in Western philosophical literature.

The Phenomenology of Imagination

According to Sartre, imagination is distinct from both perception and conceptual thought, in terms of the way our attention is taken towards the experience. He argues that in ordinary perception, the meaning of human experience is provided by our material environment and the way things appear to us. It is due to our knowledge, affections, and goals that we see a certain part of an inhabited environment as a city or a village and not as a group of buildings or houses. However, in imagination, the relation to the object of attention is different. “The matter is not experienced as properly having a certain sense, but as presenting a sense borrowed from some other object. We do not perceive the matter as having that sense, but rather imagine that other object. (...) A photograph is not confused for the thing it is a photograph of, but that thing is imagined through the photograph. This is the structure that unites the various kinds of brain events that Sartre understands as imagining: the matter of the experience is endowed with sense of another object, and is understood as in some way presenting that other object” (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004). What Sartre calls imagination should be, as Scruton suggests, considered a “special theory of imagination” (1979, 76) that describes our active engagement in thought without necessarily asserting that it is true or coinciding with actuality. This particular understanding of the world, as I will show you later, is at the root of every aesthetic experience.

Sartre isolates four distinctive characteristics of imagining that are intended to capture its “intentional” structure. First, the image is a consciousness. Second, imagination emerges as a phenomenon of quasi-observation. Third, the imagining consciousness posits its object as nothingness. And fourth, it involves spontaneity.

¹⁸ Virtual is taken in a sense of reality that is not actualized.

The first characteristic describes a feature that is common both to perception and imagination. Sartre uses the example of a chair. When one imagines the chair on which we sit, just as much as when we see it, our mental state presents it to us as directly related to something in the world. Whether we perceive it or imagine it, the object of perception and the object of our image are identical — it is that leather chair or that red chair that our consciousness relates to. Thus, there are no images in consciousness, for an image is nothing other than a relation:

“The word ‘image’ could only indicate therefore the relation of consciousness to the object; in other words, it is a certain way in which the object appears to consciousness, or, if one prefers, a certain way in which consciousness presents to itself an object. To tell the truth, the expression ‘mental image’ gives rise to confusion. It would be better to say ‘consciousness of Pierre-as-imagined’ or ‘imaging consciousness of Pierre’. As the word ‘image’ is long-standing, we cannot reject it completely. But, to avoid all ambiguity, I repeat here that an image is nothing other than a relation. The imaging consciousness that I have of Pierre is not a consciousness of an image of Pierre: Pierre is directly reached, my attention is not directed at an image, but at an object.” (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 7)

The image is a mode of attention and not, as Descartes, Leibniz and Hume assumed, an object of attention, i.e., a thing in its own right. However, this mode of attention is different from both perception and conception in certain ways described by the remaining three characteristics.

The second characteristic helps us distinguish perception, in which we observe objects, from imagination, which is the phenomenon of quasi-observation. When we see a cube, to use Sartre’s example, it appears to us only in a series of profiles so certain of its faces will be hidden from view. However, perception is not limited to what is explicitly given to senses, and in spite of seeing only two or three faces we see the object as a cube, not a mere facade. This means that perception involves a “hypothesis” about the nature of the object, and we must learn objects by multiplying our views of them (i.e., an object itself becomes a synthesis of all these views). In this sense, perception is perspectival — it presents the world only from a certain point of view, a position from which some features of the world are immediately accessible, and others are not. However, Sartre reminds us that perspective is not always a way in which the human mind engages the world. When we conceive a cube, we conceive all its six sides and its eight angles simultaneously — we

apprehend its entirety in a single glance (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 8; see also Kind 2016, 83).

Imagining appears to be an intermediate case, situated between both perceiving and conceiving, yet distinct from them. Like perceiving, imagining is perspectival, for to imagine a cube means to picture how it looks from a limited point of view. However, like conceiving, “imagining presents its object in its entirety. Despite the fact that my visual image of the cube presents only some sides as facing me, that is a cube given not as a mere “hypothesis”, but with certainty (Kind 2016, 84; see also Wittgenstein 1958, 39). If someone rotates the cube in imagination, it will not change the nature of imagined object. Thus imagining has the perspectival character that normally allows observation. However, knowledge concerning the object is immediate and does not involve the uncertainty of perception — the image is given all at once (*d’un seul coup*). This is why Sartre calls it quasi-observation. “An image is not learned: it is organized exactly as the objects that are learned, but, in fact, it is given whole, for what it is, in its appearance” (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 9-10).

The third characteristic of the imaging consciousness is that it posits its object as a nothingness (fr. *néant*), meaning that the object is never posited as present. An imagined object can be posited as not existing, as absent, as existing elsewhere, or it can merely not present the object as existing. Sartre does not give examples for all of these four cases and, as Robert Hopkins observes, one can spend considerable energy trying to work out if there really is room for this many subspecies. However, what is central to the four is that they all involve a certain negation and this contrasts them not only with perception, but also with conception (Kind 2016, 84). This feature of imagination is perhaps its most distinctive characteristic and, as we shall see later, is of fundamental significance for the theory of aesthetic experience.

The last characteristic of the imaginative mode is the spontaneity it exhibits. As Dustin Stokes observes (Kind 2016, 251), by doing this, “Sartre contrasts the passivity of perception with the voluntary spontaneity of imagination”:

“[A]n imaging consciousness gives itself to itself as an imaging consciousness, which is to say as a spontaneity that produces and conserves the object as imaged. It is a kind of indefinable counterpart to the fact that the object gives itself as a nothingness. The consciousness appears to itself as creative, but without positing as object this creative character. It is thanks to this vague and fugitive quality that the image consciousness is not given

as a piece of wood that floats on the sea, but as a wave among the waves”
(Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 14).

Thus it is the combination of these four characteristics that gives images their particular power and posits that the observer has a highly active and creative role. The third characteristic, involving a reflection on an object that is thought of as non-existent, appears as particularly important. This essential nothingness of the imaged object allows humans to exhibit a kind of “double intentionality” (Scruton 2007, 247), or what philosophers of perception today call the “transparency of experience”. We are presented with some non-existing thing through some actual existing thing that our consciousness nihilates in order to produce the imagined relation. This existing actual thing is what Sartre calls the “analogon”. He gives an example of the picture of Charles III. When one sees Charles III in this portrait, the analogon is the painted canvas, and “in order to produce the object ‘Charles III’ as imaged, consciousness must be able to deny the reality of the picture, and that it could deny this reality only by standing back from reality grasped in its totality” (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 183).

This positioning of the world in its synthetic totality and the simultaneous positioning of the imaged object out of reach from that synthetic whole is what the aesthetic experience is about. This view resonates closely with the concept of “psychic distance”, which was proposed by Edward Bullough already in 1912. For consciousness to be able to imagine, Sartre writes, it must be able to stand back from the world by its own effort — it must be free. In this sense, the world carries in itself the possibility of its negation, at each moment and from each point of view (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 184). Here we see the strong interdependence of the perceptual and imaginative consciousness. In order to imagine, the consciousness needs to nihilate the world from a particular point of view but it learns that it can only do it is on the ground of that world and in connection with that ground. Recently, the rising body of work in both psychology and neurophysiology supports the idea that imaging exploits some of the same neural processing as visual perception (Markman, Klein, and Suhr 2012).

Now the question is: Are we really completely free from the materiality of the analogon? According to Merleau-Ponty, who was a close friend of Sartre but also one of his major critics, Sartre failed to adequately describe what is distinctive about imagination because he was more preoccupied with showing what the image is *not*, rather than what it really *is*. Merleau-Ponty continually argued that an image is not a mere negation of the materiality of its support (a fact that has long been underestimated, even in contemporary image theories). In “L’Œil et l’Esprit”, he criticizes the idea that perceptive

attitude and imagined consciousness should be regarded as two completely separate states of our consciousness:

“The word "image" is in bad repute because we have thoughtlessly believed that a drawing was a tracing, a copy, a second thing, and that the mental image was such a drawing, belonging among our private bric-a-brac. But if in fact it is nothing of the kind, then neither the drawing nor the painting belongs to the in-itself any more than the image does. They are the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside, which the duplicity of feeling [le sentir] makes possible and without which we would never understand the quasi presence and imminent visibility which make up the whole problem of the imaginary. The picture, the actor's mimicry—these are not devices borrowed from the real world in order to refer to prosaic things which are absent. For the imaginary is much nearer to, and much farther away from, the actual—nearer because it is in my body as a diagram of the life of the actual, with all its pulp and carnal obverse exposed to view for the first time. (...) And the imaginary is much farther away from the actual because the painting is an analogue or likeness only according to the body; because it does not offer the mind an occasion to rethink the constitutive relations of things, but rather it offers the gaze traces of vision, from the inside, in order that it may espouse them; it gives vision to that which clothes it within, the imaginary texture of the real.” (Merleau-Ponty 1993, 126)

What further distinguishes Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological investigations from those of Sartre, is his insistence on the body as the medium of consciousness. His study of vision shows us that in order for consciousness to unfold into a part of the world, it must be embodied. To perceive the world and produce it at the same time, one must be in and of its flesh. “We cannot imagine how a mind could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into painting”. This is why the aesthetic experience cannot be fully understood in isolation from the body that embodies it, nor from the object of our imaginative attention. This is an important point to which I will come back to as I move along with my study.

Imagination and Freedom

The problem of freedom was another fundamental point of disagreement between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. According to Sartre, human beings are ontologically free and this freedom is intimately bound with imagination. To be free is to be able to nihilate the

world as one perceives it. It implies that as humans we “resist responding immediately to what reality puts before us, and to consider how we should act. If consciousness only presented us with the real, it would not be possible to step back in this way. For that, we need a sense of what is not, but which might be” (Kind 2016, 92). In this sense, the passage from the actual to the virtual is a necessary condition for the freedom of consciousness and human creativity. As Jonathan Weber describes it:

“We can imagine the world or any part of it being different from the way it in fact is. This ability is necessary to motivate changing the world. We can imagine it, moreover, as being different in any number of ways, and so can present ourselves with any number of ways that we might try to mould it. We are therefore not compelled to live in the world as we find it. We can and do act to change it, and this involves imagination” (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, xxvi).

It is against this conception of liberty that Merleau-Ponty strongly argued against. In his first essay on painting entitled “Cezanne’s Doubt”, he argued that the freedom of imagination does not come when human beings turn away from the reality of the world, but rather when we turn *towards it*. Merleau-Ponty starts his essay with a fairly detailed description of Cezanne’s approach to painting. He explains that what appears to have troubled Cezanne for the whole duration of his life, were deep uncertainties about the origin of his own talent. He “wondered whether the novelty of his painting might not come from trouble with his eyes, whether his whole life had not been based upon an accident of his body.” His first works were painted fantasies, which came as projections of imagined scenes: a rape, a murder. Later on, Cezanne came to be influenced by impressionists who made him abandon the baroque technique, whose “primary aim is to capture movement”, and led him to paint the world as he felt it. Indeed, the impressionists devoted themselves to “the exact study of appearances” in a kind of pseudo-scientific manner. Therefore, “objects were depicted as they appear to instantaneous perception, without fixed contours, bound together by light and air”. However, Cezanne was not a devoted impressionist. Although he owes a great deal to Impressionism (particularly Pissarro), he quickly realized that he “wished to return to the object”. It is precisely at this point — when Cézanne wanted to cultivate an understanding of the deep awareness of the actual perceived world as a fundamental aspect of “being-in-the-world” — that Merleau-Ponty finds Cézanne’s work so important for our understanding of imagination. He writes:

“The lived object is not rediscovered or constructed on the basis of the contributions of the senses; rather, it presents itself to us from the start as

the center from which these contributions radiate. We see the depth, the smoothness, the softness, the hardness of objects; Cézanne even claimed that we see their odor. (...) It is not enough for a painter like Cézanne, an artist, or a philosopher, to create and express an idea; they must also awaken the experiences which will make their idea take root in the consciousness of others. A successful work has the strange power to teach its own lesson. (...) The painter can do no more than construct an image; he must wait for this image to come to life for other people. When it does, the work of art will have united these separate lives; it will no longer exist in only one of them like a stubborn dream or a persistent delirium, nor will it exist only in space as a colored piece of canvas. It will dwell undivided in several minds, with a claim on every possible mind like a perennial acquisition.” (Merleau-Ponty 1993, 59).

This insistence on the importance of the object’s materiality to create a painting, led Merleau-Ponty to make two important conclusions about freedom: “that we are never determined and yet that we never change, since, looking back on what we were, we can always find hints of what we have become. It is up to us to understand both these things simultaneously, as well as the way freedom dawns on us without breaking our bonds with the world”. The argument is that freedom can dawn on us as humans, only if we do not break our bonds with the world. Therefore freedom and individuality, even if it remains in the realm of imagination, can be won only in direct interaction with others and a deep involvement with the world, rather than in a disinterested detachment from it.

The Double Intentionality of Aesthetic Judgement

The English philosopher Roger Scruton developed a very influential theory of imagination and put it to the service of an aesthetic theory in his first book “Art and Imagination” (1973). It was an attempt to save aesthetics from being a marginal addition to the analytic philosophical agenda at the time. To do so, the only path for Scruton was to look at the works of continental thinkers and he found in Sartre’s theory of imagination a milestone for his own work. He argues that imagination is a capacity of rational beings that is not shared with other members of the animal kingdom. An animal can see but cannot imagine. Imagination goes beyond the actual facts and beyond the actual world perceived by senses. It is an escape from the actual. This is the foundation

for Scruton's distinction between fantasy and imagination, for fantasy is based on feelings that are real and genuine, yet generated by unreal objects.

Scruton made a distinction between the generic (or universal) theory of imagination advocated, among others, by Kant and Hume, and what he calls the special theory of imagination, which one can find in the work of Sartre but also Wittgenstein (see Scruton 1973). As I explained above, Sartre does not understand imagination as an extra component of consciousness that acts as a container of quasi objects. Indeed, an image is not an object of attention, but rather a different mode (or act) of consciousness. Scruton identifies imagination as "unasserted thoughts": It is not identified with what is simply "given" to the senses, but with what we, as individuals, can summon. In an imaginative act, we exhibit "double intentionality", meaning that we focus simultaneously on two objects: the actual object presented to perception, and the imaginary object that is invoked by the actual object. In this sense, the aesthetic response might be a response that comes from both a real actual object and an imaginary object.

Scruton's further argument is that in the aesthetic taste, the connection between experience, preference and thought is inextricable. He uses an example of John Ruskin who attempted to show that the love of stone that the Gothic cathedral builders had, and their respect for sound construction, are of identical origin; "that the process of building and the process of ornamentation are continuous parts of a single enterprise, not to be understood independently. There is no such thing as an appreciation of ornament that is not at the same time an appreciation of function" (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 125). He thus puts human action and practical engagement in the core of aesthetic experience. Following Suzanne Langer's work "Feeling and Form" (1953), Scruton makes an important distinction between the actual structure and actual function of a work of architecture, on the one hand, and the virtual structure and virtual function of a work of architecture, on the other. He argues that "actual structure is irrelevant to aesthetic judgment except and in so far as it is revealed in virtual structure" (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 125).

Following Sartre, Scruton makes another important distinction between aesthetic and sensuous pleasures. "The pleasure of aesthetic experience is inseparable from the act of attention to its object; it is not the kind of a pleasure characteristic of mere sensation, such as the pleasure of a hot bath or a good cigar. In other words, aesthetic pleasures are not merely accompanied by attention to an object. They are essentially connected with that attention, and when attention ceases, whatever pleasure continues can no longer be exercises of taste" (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 114). In this sense, Scruton concludes that aesthetic pleasure is not so much an effect of its object, as a mode of

understanding it. Now, how one's understanding of architecture (or inhabited environments in general) changes comes as a result of complex social, historical, economic or political circumstances. It thus comes as a result of particular spatial conditions in which each individual lives, evolves and matures, and in which the urban space appears to play a fundamental role.

The City as Aesthetic Object

Aesthetic contemplation is a mode of attention that, as I explained earlier, presents the world not as it is but as it might be through some existing actual object serving as an analogon. However, this analogon, i.e., the aesthetic object, should not be taken for granted. It is only in connection to this object that we, as humans, can engage in imaginative acts. Therefore, I will search for the description of our mental state not only inwards (as in the classical phenomenological method, which consists of "bracketing" and isolating a particular mental state) but also outwards, where our actions, intentions and mental states are visible in various forms of material and ideal expressions. I will repeat that objects of art are by no means the only objects that pretend to become aesthetic objects. In fact, "any concrete and real situation of consciousness in the world is pregnant with the imaginary" (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 186), and consequently, every known thing bears the possibility of producing the imaginative and thus, an aesthetic response. This is why one might say that the aesthetic dimension runs through our entire society.

If one is interested in writings on the aesthetic appreciation of inhabited environments, one discovers that the category of the city seems to be peculiarly absent from the principal philosophical investigations, in spite of the high priority assigned to aesthetic questions by European philosophers since the Enlightenment. Writings on the aesthetics of the city came rather from writers, architects and artists, though their approach is descriptive rather than critical (or it lacks strong theoretical groundedness). I have said that Kant was involved in investigating the aesthetics of nature for he hoped to find in it some universal principles behind our faculty of judgment of taste. Consequently, the city, as a pure artifact pregnant with historicity, was excluded from his writings. As for Hegel, in his great lectures on aesthetics, turned his attention to art and replaced Kantian aesthetics with the philosophy of art (Hegel 1998). There might be several reasons why Hegel excluded the category of the city from his aesthetics. First, he might have considered the city as a political and economic category and therefore not an aesthetic one, although this hypothesis appears rather improbable. Architects and painters in

Hegel's time treated the city as an aesthetic object, so there was no reason for a philosopher of aesthetics to ignore it. The second reason for excluding the city as an aesthetic category might lay in the fact that the city lacked the kind of unity an artwork requires. Third, the city might violate the unity of a total object since it is never constructed (apart from some rare exceptions) as a single piece at one time. Fourth, the city violates the unity of objective individuality, i.e., the ideal of organicity (see Lampert 2001). This might explain why Hegel considered art, rather than the city or nature, as the highest expression of the "Absolute Spirit". However, there might be another, simpler reason for the absence of the city from the aesthetic investigations of philosophers from Kant to Nietzsche. They maybe simply failed to recognize the importance that lived inhabited space has on the human condition. It was only after the deep societal and environmental changes that took place after the rise of big cities in the nineteenth-century that city and urban problems in general started to be a subject of interest to philosophers.

In the last third of the 20th century, environmental aesthetics, a relatively new discipline, emerged as a sub-field of philosophical aesthetics, its focus of inquiry being natural environments as well as human and human-influenced environments. In part, it was a response to the "growing public concern about the apparent degeneration of the environment", and a result of "the academic world becoming aware of the significance of the environmental movement — at the level of both theoretical discussion and practical action" (Carlson 2015). Environmental aesthetics attempt to provide answers to the fundamental issues about the appreciation of the world at large.¹⁹ Yet, it seems to me that

¹⁹ Allen Carlson argues that there are two approaches to the question developed in the discipline itself: cognitive (alternatively called conceptual or narrative) and non-cognitive (non-conceptual or ambient according to some authors). The cognitive position unites authors who consider that "knowledge and information about the nature of the object of appreciation is central to its aesthetic appreciation". This means that in order to aesthetically appreciate works of architecture, the downtown of a big city or a dense old forest, it is taken to be essential that we experience them "as what they in fact are", and in the light of the knowledge of their real qualities, in the same way that we appreciate works of art. In all such cases, the knowledge provided by the social sciences is as relevant as the knowledge given by the natural sciences, which include "local and regional narratives, folklore, and even mythological stories" as complementary to scientific knowledge. In contrast to cognitive approaches are several so-called non-cognitive approaches, which argue against the necessity of knowledge. However, as Carlson explains, the non-cognitive approach should not be taken in its older philosophical sense, as meaning primarily or only emotive. It indicates simply that something other than a cognitive component is central to the aesthetic appreciation of environments. The leading non-cognitive approach, often called the aesthetics of engagement, and upheld by authors such as Arnold Berleant, stresses "the contextual dimensions of the environment" and our "multi-sensory experience of it" by calling for "the total immersion of the appreciator in the object of appreciation". It challenges the importance of dichotomy between subject and object by "viewing the environment as a unity of places, organisms and perceptions" (see Carlson, 2012).

the influence of urban space and space in general is still under-investigated, since most studies have been taking the concept of space itself for granted.

As Jane Jacobs observed in her influential analysis of “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” (1961), it makes no sense to think of the city as “a collection of separate file drawers”. She argues that the city raises a problem of “organized complexity” and presents “situations in which a half-dozen or even several dozen quantities are all varying simultaneously and in subtly interconnected ways”. What is essential to recognize is that the city, as a complex urban system, exhibits emerging properties that belong to the system as a whole, and vanishes when one changes scale to the level of its subsystems or the level of its components (e.g., the level of a single building or a single street). The beauty of a city is a classical example of the emerging property of a city, since the aesthetic appreciation of the city as a whole cannot be understood as the sum of the aesthetic appreciations of its separate parts only.

Although there are several new approaches in the field of aesthetics, the dominant analytic aesthetics tends to be heavily influenced by the discussions of the aesthetics related to art only. Irvin illustrates this with the following observation. During the calendar years 2001–2006, of approximately 270 articles published in the two major English-language print journals of aesthetics, the *British Journal of Aesthetics* and the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 95 percent focused on art, 3 percent focused on nature, and five articles, or under 2 percent, focused on something else (Irvin 2008).

As for urban studies, the subject of aesthetics seems to be present rather in fragments (and usually equated with sensuous pleasures!). In the impressive 1128 pages of the “*Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*” (Lévy 2013) and the 1052 pages of the “*Dictionary of Human Geography*” (Gregory et al. 2011), there is no separate entry for the notion of aesthetics. Of course, this does not mean that aesthetic considerations are completely absent from human geography. Kantian aesthetics played an important part in discussions of postmodern sensibilities and particular attention was paid to the aestheticisation of politics in both modernism and postmodernism (Harvey 1992). Since many geographers still consider aesthetics as *terrae incognitae* and seem to confirm Wright’s (1947) observation that “aesthetic subjectivity is always unscientific”, a bridge needs to be built between the aesthetic theory and the urban theory. This thesis is a contribution to this task.

3 Urbanity

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – “

Charles Dickens

Today, like in the nineteenth century when cities were rapidly expanding, human beings are faced with the challenge of how to move and live in our ever-changing environment. Each one of us has to choose the way in which he or she will inhabit the Earth and this choice happens to be a choice of society as well. In order to be able to make this choice, each individual has to regulate the various relations of distance (that are topographical or topological in nature) between the numerous realities that enter into the constitution of the world. In other words, each individual has to participate in a societal process of space production, which includes various actors with different actions and intentions. It is in this sense that Michel Lussault considers humans as “spatial animals” (Lussault 2007) who inhabit space in a phenomenological manner, which in turn allows each participant of society to observe societal mutations and stasis in the light of, and through, a spatial prism. The concept of urbanity, particularly in its critical formulation developed by Jacques Lévy (1994), allows me to take such an approach. Urbanity belongs to the type of phenomenon that, as Norbert Elias explains, come into being without having been planned or intended by anyone, yet emerges from people’s intentions and actions (Norbert 1994, 389). It is a result of the functioning of an urban system; though, at the same time, it is also a consequence of this functioning, that is, an operator of its organization. Studying urbanity forces researchers to consider both ‘the forest and the trees’ and to bridge a gap between the holistic approach and the individualistic scientific approach. It allows researchers to ask not only: What is city?, but also: When is city?

The World is Spatial and Founded on Action

Many researchers have stressed the fact that until the twentieth century, theoretical thought had privileged the concept of time (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986). The historical turn that took place in the nineteenth century overtook almost every discipline in such a way that every subject matter of Western thought was interpreted from a historical perspective. Although space was not absent from theoretical investigations, the main European thinkers and philosophers were not concerned with the investigation of spaces created by humans organized in societies. They only started becoming interested in this question of social spaces during the twentieth century. With the works of Simmel, Heidegger, Lefebvre, Foucault, Certeau, Deleuze or Guattari, the spatial dimension finally approached the historical dimension in its capacity to interpret and explain the social phenomena. Today, there is a deep shift happening in the way science, but also society at large, thinks about space and spatial perspective, in terms of understanding the city and the contemporary world. This fundamental change in theoretical knowledge is often designated as the spatial turn. It allowed space to become one of the fundamental dimensions of society and reinforced the importance of geography within the domain of the social sciences. Geography, as a science of space, could not contribute to the spatial turn without undergoing an epistemological revolution itself, which it did, in the writings of authors such as David Harvey, Edward Soya or Jacques Lévy. This “geographical turn” finally allowed researchers to reflect on space in order to decipher the world, as the subtitle of Lévy’s book indicates (*Penser l’espace pour lire le monde*) (Lévy 1999).

Among the thinkers who put a strong emphasis on space, Martin Heidegger stands out with his idea of making humans ontologically spatial beings (see Malpas 2012). He crystallized his ideas in the groundbreaking philosophical work “Being and Time”, published in 1927 (2010). The novelty of his approach was not only to give a central role to space, but also to expand the idea of inhabiting from dwelling to a much larger space. Heidegger’s understanding of space has affinities to both relational theory of Leibniz and Kantian theory, but at the same time, Heidegger introduces an important distinction in his theory. Following Kant, Heidegger recognized space as the condition under which individuals can have a coherent experience of the world. However, unlike Kant, who defines space as an a priori element to all experience, Heidegger attributes space to individuals’ active ‘being’ and their practical involvement in the world. In other words, he introduces social space as the fundamental constitutive element of Being. His

objections to the traditional debates on space are related to their groundedness in the metaphysical dichotomy of subject and object. Whether researchers speak of the objective Leibnizian nature of space or the purely subjective Kantian understanding of space, both of these theories share the same dichotomy. Heidegger rejects this assumption and “seeks the condition for dichotomy itself, a condition under which we can have conceptions of both objective and subjective space” (Arisaka 2008). For him, humans exist spatially and this space of existence (which could be called the “lived” space or “phenomenological” space) is founded on the spatiality of Being-in-the-world (see Ströker 1987, 13-170). Spatiality becomes essential to self-consciousness not only because the world is spatial but also because the subject is him/herself a spatial element of the world. In this sense, the subject is in a constitutive relation to the external world, which also becomes a component of being. However, the world as space itself is founded on the spatiality of Being. Human beings’ actions thus become the essential element of space itself. It is precisely in his understanding of the relation between the subject and his/her social environment that the theory of Heidegger generates the fiercest debates.

In the famous fourth chapter of “Being and Time”, entitled “Being-in-the-World as Being-with and Being a Self: The ‘They’” and particularly in the 27th paragraph “Everyday Being One's Self and the They”, Heidegger develops his ideas on how an individual constitutes himself or herself as such. His position is that “I” can only constitute itself in some kind of “us” and by means of some “us”, in Being-with: “a mere subject without a world “is” not initially and is also never given. And, thus, an isolated I without the others is in the end just as far from being given initially” (2010, 116). However in Heidegger’s frame of understanding, the community precedes the individual and it is thanks to the community that the individual shapes and develops his or her individuality. Heidegger’s subject is not even a real subject (at least not the kind of subject announced by the modern era). At the beginning of the fourth chapter, he indicates that he will be dealing with the “subject” of everydayness, but he puts the word ‘subject’ in brackets. This desubjectivated subject does not actively constitute him/herself by interacting with the environment but is always already constituted through some indefinite “they” that has an existential character:

“We enjoy ourselves and have fun the way they enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way they see and judge. But we also withdraw from the ‘great mass’ the way they withdraw, we find “shocking” what they find shocking. The they, which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness” (Heidegger, Stambaugh, and Schmidt 2010, 119).

Heidegger is being ironic here. Even when his subject withdraws from the great mass, he or she does it in the same way that the great mass does it. In this sense, the individual is freed from the responsibility of his/her acts by the homogenous communal society. However, this comes with a price. Heidegger assumes here that individuals act as mere passive agents who adapt to a set of predetermined collective identities that are constant over time. Thus, Heidegger's demands of us as humans to refuse historicity and mobility, and embrace places anchored in a local environment where everything is an expression of the changeless character of that environment. The limits of this approach rapidly appear to anyone interested in understanding the problems raised by our modern urban societies, which are characterized by an increasing importance given to spaces that are topological in nature. Topological spaces allow the constitution of "a network full of nodes that are more consistent, more numerous and better interconnected" (Lévy 2014, 55). The Heideggerian conception denies humans the possibility of overcoming the limits of territory, which becomes the tragic destiny of our human condition. The following question thus arises: Is it possible for the subject to constitute him/herself without completely giving up his/her individuality to the community? Or, as Lévy asks: "Can the World be inhabited in a non-Heideggerian manner?" (2014, 52).

Inhabiting in the Society of Individuals

If I make the assumption that society is not a separate anonymous "entity" weighing down upon individuals from the outside, but rather a complex system produced by socially interdependent individuals, then each individual actively constitutes a society in terms of their various capitals (spatial, economic, intellectual, etc.), their interests, beliefs and goals as well as their experiences and expectations. The idea is to study humans not from the abstract concept of 'Dasein' and hyphenated desubjectivated formulations such as "being-with-others", but from the real actions and discourses of self-conscious actors seen as *homines aperti* ("open people"). This conception of individuals was developed by Norbert Elias (Elias 1984), who considered that humans should not be studied as "closed" subjects that think only in their container (or what he calls *homo clausus*). Instead, he counterposes his own conceptual starting point of "open" interdependent people, bound with each other on various dimensions and co-determining one another both in co-operation and competition. It is important to observe that *homines aperti* is a vision of "people in the plural; we obviously need to start out with the image of a multitude of people, each of them relatively open, interdependent processes" (Elias 1984, 121). Thus, he insists on the understanding of individuals as processes rather than static agents.

Humans exist only in interdependent relation with others. The idea behind Elias's basic position is essentially Weberian. The personality of each individual and social structure have a close interrelationship. As a social structure changes, so does the personality of each individual, which causes further changes in the social structure (see Elwell 2009). To illustrate his position, Elias uses the following metaphor: Social structure, he argues, is like a dance. Dancers follow the rules of a dance, but these rules are inherently connected to the movements the dancers make in relation to each other (Elias 1978). The individual and society are therefore inseparable parts of a single whole, incapable of being understood as separate phenomena; "the concept of the individual refers to interdependent persons; the concept of society to interdependent persons in the plural form" (Elias cited in Quintaneiro 2006). The categories of 'the individual' and 'society' express only "differences in the viewpoint of the observer, whom at times may focus on the persons that form the group and, at other times, on the group formed by them" (Elias cited in Quintaneiro 2006).

Elias wanted to show that we as people can only understand ourselves if we study both the individual and the social as a "networked agency", i.e., a complex network of social interdependencies (or figuration). This is how he understands the human condition:

"To get a closer view of this kind of interrelationship, one might think of the object from which the concept of the network is derived, a woven net. In such a net there are many individual threads linked together. Yet neither the totality of the net, nor the form taken by each thread in it, can be understood in terms of a single thread alone, or even all the threads considered singly; it is understood solely in terms of the way they are linked, their relationship to each other. This linking gives rise to a system of tensions to which each single thread contributes, each in a somewhat different manner according to its place and function in the totality of the net. The form of the individual thread changes if the tension and structure of the whole net changes. Yet this net is nothing other than a linking of individual threads; and within the entire net, each thread still forms a unity in itself; it has a unique position and form within it." (Elias 2001, 32)

It is through different social interdependencies that individuals define the self and the world, and orient their thoughts and actions. In this sense, our feelings and aesthetic judgments can only be understood as part of these interdependencies (which have become greater and more complex since the early Middle Ages, and in particular since the rise of big nineteenth century cities). Since Norbert Elias' (dynamic) sociology

provides correlations that cross micro-macro perspectives with social-individual perspectives, it allows us to analyze social issues that arise and change across different contexts. Together with Weber, Durkheim and other contemporary scholars, Elias describes the contemporary social world as a “society of individuals” (Elias 2001), indicating the emergence of a new form of social organization in developed countries. Norberto Bobbio argues that this struggle against various modes of organicism produces various modes of individualism (eg., liberal individualism or democratic individualism) and explains this condition in the following words:

“Liberalism amputates the individual from the organic body, makes him live – at least for much of his life – outside the maternal womb, plunges him into the unknown and perilous world of the struggle for survival. Democracy joins him together once more with others like himself, so that society can be built up again from their union, no longer as an organic whole but as an association of free individuals” (Bobbio, Ryle, and Soper 2005, 43)

This passage from “an organic whole” towards “an association of free individuals” is a relatively new societal condition that had already been outlined in 1887 by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies. In his famous work “*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*”²⁰ (1988), he introduced a conceptual tool to make a distinction between *Gemeinschaft*, a community-type of social order based on the ideal of homogeneity and imbued with a sense of moral obligation to the group, and *Gesellschaft*, a society organized by the principal of heterogeneity. However, we often find that the two apparently opposing impulses are deeply intermingled and mutually reinforce each other. Frederic Jameson highlights the “ambivalent envy and resentment of the *Gesellschaft*” for remaining enclaves of “the older *Gemeinschaft*”, which creates a pretext for various contemporary fantasies. An example provided by Jameson can be found in the celebrated movie “*The Godfather*”. At a time when the disintegration of *Gemeinschaft* communities reinforces itself in terms of a deterioration of the family, the growth of permissiveness, and the loss of authority of the father, (...) the tightly knit bonds of the Mafia family (in both senses) and the protective security of the (god-) father with his omnipresent authority offer a contemporary pretext for a Utopian fantasy” (Hardt and Weeks 2000, 145). Similar to this view, Marshal Berman argues that this contradiction, consisting of being simultaneously enthusiasts and enemies of modern life, lies at the heart of our modern

²⁰ The first English translation appeared in 1940 as “Fundamental Concepts of Sociology” (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*), New York: American Book Co. Note that a 1955 translation “Community and Association” (*Gemeinschaft und gesellschaft*), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

condition and can even (as was the case of nineteenth-century thinkers) become the primary source of its creative power (Berman 1988, 24).

This new society of individuals, according to Lévy, is “by no means less societal than the former communal society. On the contrary, it is characterized by both more individuality and more society” (Lévy 2014, 54). It gives also a new consistency to a specific relationship between actors and their environments. A fundamental question arises: Is there a connection between the way of inhabiting and the choice of society? If the notion of inhabiting is a fully spatial concept, how does a change in spatial configurations influence people’s ways of inhabiting the Earth?

Urbanity as Phenomenon Emerging From a Combination of Density and Diversity

In one of the founding texts of the Chicago school of urban sociology entitled “Urbanism As a Way of Life” (1938), Louis Wirth argues that “what is distinctively modern in our civilization is best signalized by the growth of great cities. Nowhere has mankind been farther removed from organic nature than under the conditions of life characteristic of great cities”. His biggest theoretical concern at the time was the inexistence of a sociological definition of the city, despite the multiplication of studies and textbooks on the subject. In an attempt to treat the “subject matter in a more integrated and systematic fashion”, he famously proposed three variables to explain the emergence of “urbanism as a characteristic mode of life”: the number of people, the density of the settlement and the degree of heterogeneity. This simple yet powerful formulation was later used by Lévy, who proposed to replace the concept of urbanism (easily confused with urban planning) with the concept of urbanity. For Lévy, urbanity emerges in respect to both the functional and sociological diversity of the urban system and its multidimensional density (built environment, flows, people, ideas). In this sense, the “level” of urbanity is directly proportional to the density and diversity of a given urban situation. As an emergent phenomenon of the urban system, including material and ideal social realities and referring to both actuality and virtuality, this “level” of urbanity is an extremely difficult phenomenon to work with, particularly when researchers want to measure it. However, in order to study the processes of urbanization and the dynamics of urban societies, the concept of urbanity provides a critical (not just descriptive) scientific approach, as well as a detachment from the historical European

referred to *Gesellschaft* as “association”. In 1957, in the edition of East Lansing, the title in English changed again to “Community and Society”.

matrix epitomized in the image of the walled compact city. The concept of urbanity allows researchers like myself to first compare big and small cities, and then to compare Neolithic agglomerations with contemporary cities, rich and poor cities, and eastern and western cities, and so on.

Since the entire world is undergoing rapid urbanization, the sharp distinctions that formerly existed between the urban and the rural can no longer be relevant conceptual tools in the field of urban studies. Instead, Lévy proposed to study the urban space as consisting of various “geotypes”, each having their own different level (or intensity) of urbanity. In a series of books and articles (Lévy 1983; Lévy, Déloye, and Haegel 1993; Lévy 1999; Lévy 2013), he defends the position that researchers can identify different urban types (or models of urbanity): the center, the suburb, the peri-urban, the infra-urban, the para-urban, the meta-urban. In this sense, there is no violent switch from city to countryside, but rather from one more or less urban context to another. In the European context, urbanity is understood as being at its maximum level in the center of the city (which is not necessarily in the “geometrical” or historical center), and as declining as one moves to areas with lower intensities of density and diversity. For example, a mono-functional tourist station is regarded as an urban spatial configuration with the lowest possible degree of urbanity. Since each societal dimension is present in each “model” of urbanity, they might equally be considered as models of societies. It is important however to underline that the city is not just one urban type among others. The more urbanity a certain urban reality generates, the more it gains in singularity, and finally the more difficult it is to define it as a category (i.e., as a type).

While many leading North-American social scientists focus almost exclusively on the economic inequalities of contemporary capitalist societies, others engage in a more systematic approach. For example, Richard Florida stresses the importance of social diversity for attracting highly skilled workers (the creative class) to urban labor markets (Florida 2010; 2005). In addition, Fran Tonkiss, in her close dialogue with Wirth, Jacobs and Lefebvre, argues for social, economic and cultural heterogeneity as both the products and conditions for the very existence of cities as a particular mode of spatial organization (Tonkiss 2014, 50). However, for Tonkiss, “designing for diversity” does not simply mean prescribing “mixed uses”, but leaving undefined grounds for improvisation as well. In this view, urbanity unleashes its full strength because it allows the emergence of a variety of unpredicted social practices, which in turn may become important elements of social change. In the same line of thought, Lévy stresses the role of serendipity as a particularly creative force of urban public spaces (Lévy 2011). The strength of intersections of difference that occur frequently in unobtrusive and incidental

ways was also recognized by Saskia Sassen, who finds in them the quality of what she calls “cityness” and what we might call “high” or “strong” urbanity.

Urbanity is not to be understood as the eternal reproduction of some ‘magic’ moments in the history of great world cities. Without critical connection to the direct experience of contemporary spatial actors, any reproduction of the Parisian arcades of Walter Benjamin or Manhattan’s West Village of Jane Jacobs (as products of particular social, historical and economic circumstances) will remain a mere *simulacra*. This is often the problem with architects and planners of New Urbanism, whose work suffers from a great paradox — by constantly repeating the same urban form and thus following the ideal of homogeneity and nostalgic visions, they produce spaces that are in total contradiction with the forces that gave rise to the very urban forms they are trying to reproduce. What is lacking in their approach is the interpolation of all societal dimensions and all societal actors in the production of urban forms and urban spaces.

The City As a Fundamental Concept For Critical Urban Theory

Many scholars posture lost organicity as being one of the central problems of the contemporary city and significant time is consumed to address this issue. For example, the 22nd ISUF conference, which took place in Rome, was entitled “City as organism. New visions for urban life” (2015). During this conference, the possibilities of a “new organicity” were widely discussed. I believe that this kind of research is rather inefficacious for one and simple fact: A city is simply not an organism – it is an order, not a being. If organicity is defined as being a stable balanced whole without internal contradictions, then the more urbanity a city generates, the more it moves away from the ideal of organicity, which is a sort of final solution that a single individual is capable of fully grasping and clearly understanding. Many ‘great’ urban planners, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Patrick Geddes or Le Corbusier completely failed to recognize this fact; Their plans produced overly simplified mono-functional urbanism, unable to cope with complexity of urban social systems and the various spaces that support them. Cassirer theoreticized the fundamental difference between an order and a being in the following manner:

“As the concept of being is correlated with unity, *as ens et unum convertuntur*, as Scholasticism has formulated it, so there is an analogous correlation between multiplicity and order. As soon as the point of gravity

in thought shifts from the pole of being to the pole of order in the total theoretical view of reality and specifically in the theoretical conception and interpretation of space, then a victory of pluralism over abstract monism, of a multiplicity of forms over a single form, is established” (Cassirer 1969, 8).

This fact was recognized in 1940 by Wirth, who argued that the task of urban sociology was precisely to investigate “the spatial order of urban life” (1940). However, to be able to investigate it we must also recognize its complexity, or more precisely its double complexity. Juval Portugali argues that cities are dual complex systems in several respects (Portugali:te p.5-7 , see also Portugali 2011). First, the city emerges out of the activities of its agents and it is precisely the urban agents that, by means of their interaction with other components of the human social system (including themselves) and the environment, transform the artifact city into a complex system. However, once the city emerges, “its structure and dynamics affect the behavior of its agents and so on in circular causality”. This is precisely the way in which urbanity emerges and affects the city and its components. Second, artifacts are not, according to Portugali “just the outcome of human interaction, but are also the media of interaction; artifacts such as texts, cities, buildings or roads are external representations of ideas, intentions, memories and thoughts that originate and reside in the mind of urban agents — that is to say, of internal representations. They interact by means of the externally represented artifacts, be they texts, clothes, buildings, neighborhoods or whole cities and metropolises”. Urban dynamics thus involve an ongoing interaction between external and internal representations. This means that a student of urban dynamics must take into an account a whole material and ideal sphere of human existence, as well as an ongoing and never-ending “interaction between external and internal representations”. And third, humans as the components of a hybrid complex system but also as the systems themselves,²¹ “are simultaneously subject to two evolutionary processes: very slow natural evolution, which they rarely witness in their lifetime, and very fast cultural evolution, whose effect on the urban agents is instantaneous”, forcing urban agents to constantly adapt to the rapidly-changing urban environment. The question Portugali then asks is this: How do humans adapt to such rapid cultural changes? His answer is: “By means of their cognitive capabilities”. This might be true, but it is essential to recognize that what helps individuals develop and orientate these cognitive capabilities is precisely our experience (taken in both senses, as *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*) with an environment during our lifetime. Since each of these experiences is spatial, studying spatial structures gives us an excellent insight into the processes that structure urban systems. One more question thus

²¹ As I stated previously in the section “More is Different. Toward Systemic Approach“, humans are biological systems themselves and they can create systems by interacting with other humans or non-humans (see also Bunge 1982, 7).

arises: What is it with the city that makes it a “rapidly-changing” environment, and how does this characteristic of the city affect people’s actions, judgments and feelings?

It is important to understand that the city is “a concept that is fundamentally spatial” (Lévy 1994, author’s translation). Cities have been and still are the most effective places to bring different people together on a relatively compact territory. From this simple yet fundamental fact emerges the specificity of the city as a particular spatial organization. In other words, the city is an extremely efficient spatial tool for abolishing distances between people and their artefacts. However, this process has another side to it: Cities are also shaped by forces of exclusion, expressed by the spatial actors from other members of society through various acts of distance creation (physical, economic, cultural, etc.). Thus, a high level of urbanity always comes with certain tensions that appear to be an important element behind both vibrancy and liveliness, but also conflict, in big dense cities. Contrary to Thomas Wüsts’s assertion that urbanity is a myth (Wüst 2013), I argue that it is a reality of the daily lives of millions of people worldwide struggling for space, and struggling for their way in the contemporary urban condition and emerging World-society.

In the epistemological sense, the category of “the city” is still a matter of dispute in contemporary urban theory. Some contemporary urban thinkers feel emboldened to proclaim that the city is a residue of the past. With the recent publication of the article “Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?” (2015), Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid argue that urban theory now requires a fundamental rethinking. They want to set urban research on a new course by criticizing the “city-centrism” they believe is holding back both mainstream and critical urban research. According to them, the city, as one of the foundational concepts of urban theory, “must be revisited if urban theory is to respond to the rapidly changing geographies of urbanization and urban struggle under early 21st century capitalism”. The way researchers respond to the Brenner and Schmidt’s criticism strongly depends on their epistemological foundations. Only if the urban is considered as “coherently contained within or anchored to the city”, can it be said that Brenner and Schmidt’s position is untenable. However, I argue that the existing concept of urbanity (understood as a phenomenon that emerges from both the functional and sociological diversity of the urban system and its multidimensional density) is a powerful critical tool for studying past, present and potential spatial realities. In addition, abandoning “the city” as an empirical and a theoretical category comes, I believe, with the great risk of driving a cleft between urban theory and human experience. This is why I am an advocate of the position defended by Davidson and Iveson (2015), who, in response to Brenner and Schmidt, still see the city as “an anchor for critical urban studies”.

Measuring Emergent Phenomena

If urbanity exists, how can researchers observe its emergence and its effects? One way of doing this is by quantifying the concentrations of people, artefacts, institutions and buildings, and their juxtaposition in various networks of communication and flow across and beyond the urban fabric. Researchers can then investigate various communal and societal practices, such as the norms of household formation in different urban environments, people's patterns of consumption and travel behaviors, ways of interacting in the public space, etc. However, though some of these things can be measured and mapped, certain characteristics of urban systems cannot be deduced by recourse to statistical or behavioral facts. Emily Talen and Chris Ellis (Talen and Ellis 2002, 42) stated this in the following way:

“[W]hether compact urban forms produce fewer car trips or impact social groups differently can be empirically treated. But there are aesthetic and ethical components to these theories that need to be debated on their own terms. They cannot be resolved by an appeal to data alone. Some principles are not provable in the conventional scientific sense, and indeed, the constant war of numbers engaging pro sprawl and anti sprawl debaters has not convinced anyone to change direction.”

The problem lies in the difficulty of establishing causal links between urban actors, their actions, and the effects of these actions on the functioning of the entire urban system. My position, as elaborated in the previous chapters, is that human actions are always multidimensional and socially situated, which further implies that if researchers are faced with the problem of measuring subjectivity, we can only do so by taking into account the referential social and urban space in which a particular phenomenon emerges. In the same way, aesthetic qualities are not to be taken as properties of the environment per se, nor as properties of the person reacting to the environment. Rather, aesthetic qualities should be considered as properties that emerge from the interaction between individuals and their environment, within a process of constituting themselves as subjects, and where each individual has an idea of what society should be like and what it should look like.²²

²² Studies on social and spatial justice show that people have more or less clear ideas of what kind of society they want to live in (Fauchille 2016).

Some Hypotheses On the Aesthetic Dimension of Urban Agency

Considering that social relations are “reducible to social actions” (Bunge 1999) and that social actions are always spatial — i.e., they occur in a set of relations that are both pre-established and produced by actors themselves, — a study of (social) spaces is an approach par excellence for anyone interested in understanding the logics behind the judgments, feelings and desires that influence various actions of the members of society. Space holds an existential position in human lives for the character of our societies is defined by actions that occur in various spaces produced by these societies. In this sense, as individuals, we are all dependent on the interactions with other members of society, to the extent that our actions only make sense if taken in regard to other members of society. As Elias reminds us, “the special shaping and differentiation of mental functions that we refer to as ‘individuality’ is only possible for a person who grew up in a group, a society” (Elias 2001). As human beings, we express our individuality because of society, not in spite of it.

Each human actor, as a component of the human social system, has the capacity to make aesthetic judgments, and exhibits aesthetic agency as a part of his/her everyday interactions with both other members of society and the environment. In this sense, the aesthetic dimension, together with a number of other dimensions (biological, economic, political, etc.), influence the character, strength and diversity of social relations that determine the features of the social system. Since society is a complex social system, entirely new properties emerge at each level of complexity. In this sense, some emerging properties belong to the system as a whole or to its various subsystems, while parts that are taken out of the system and considered separately, do not exhibit these properties. These properties can be objective, such as urbanity, or subjective, such as the beauty of the city.

Contemporary (western) society is an urban society, as both actuality and virtuality (Lefebvre 2003, 2). This fact is confirmed to the extent that even the Alpine territory has become an urbanized macro-region (Schmid et al. 2001). However, the urban character of this enormous system and its subsystems is not homogenous and varies significantly in its degrees of urbanity, i.e., the intensity of its density, and the diversity of its various components (material and ideal) that coexist in a certain moment of time. In this sense, the urbanity of a particular urban situation emerges as a result of the spatial and social conditions in which each individual constitutes himself or herself as such and in which he/she develops his/her attitudes and judgments toward other members of society. I

describe this interactive relation between the spatial actors and spatialised environment with the concept of ‘inhabiting’, which “consist[s] of a dynamic balance between acting (inhabiting) and becoming (being inhabited)” (Lévy 2014, 65).

To inhabit means to act in society in a way that produces or restricts social relations, and this is only possible through particular spatial arrangements that reinforce or reduce distances between other members of society and their natural or artificial environments. It is in this sense that the concept of inhabiting (as the sum of all actual and virtual spatialities of one particular human actor) and his or her habitus (the space that allows this or that particular action) are connected. Amongst an innumerable number of actions that define the life of an individual, the choice of a residential environment plays a particularly important role since it necessitates various spatial arrangements in order to become actualized as such. This choice is influenced by all dimensions of society, without any particular hierarchy between the different dimensions. In this sense, the aesthetic dimension plays a role that is just as important as the political, economic or ethical dimensions. Since it is simply impossible to study everything simultaneously, I will isolate the aesthetic dimension in order to be able to proceed to the artifice of the construction of the scientific object, and raise the following hypotheses:

1. Inhabitants’ immediate residential environment strongly influences their aesthetic judgments.
2. There is a link between aesthetic judgments and political and ethical choices.
3. For an individual needing to choose a residential environment, aesthetic factors are just as important as economic, biological or political factors.

4 The Methodology

“No one, wise Kublai, knows better than you that the city must never be confused with the words that describe it. And yet between the one and the other there is a connection.”

Italo Calvino

Recent shifts in the field of social science, namely the visual, qualitative, actorial and spatial shifts, all indicate an increasing interest in individuals and their interests, beliefs and commitments. In this sense, my main task will be to investigate the mechanisms that drive the production of an aesthetic space as a genuine lived space. However, this task cannot be accomplished by merely observing individuals as passive agents. Instead, my epistemological imperative will consist in acknowledging that research participants are also co-producers of knowledge. This does not imply, in any case, that I do not start my investigation with a pre-established set of questions and general hypotheses, but rather, it keeps me from falling into the positivist trap that arises when theory is separated from research. At the same time, it allows me to raise an entirely new set of questions and hypotheses while continuing to engage myself in self-questioning. My method will primarily involve the preparation and conduction of the classical semi-structured interview and photo-interview, and will be followed by an analysis of the transcribed participants' discourse. I will use some strategies of the grounded theory to dissect, examine and compare the participants' discourses. This will be accompanied by a critical discourse analysis. In addition, I will investigate the participants' choice of residential environment and some spatial planning practices to demonstrate how the aesthetic dimension plays a significant role in the actual processes that structure the Swiss urban environment, i.e., how aesthetic space interacts with other human spaces such as urban, political or architectural spaces. My intention is to study the aesthetic dimension of the urban system in both a hermeneutical and a pragmatic manner.

Studying Subjectivity: A Spatial and Historical Analysis of Aesthetic Judgment

The main objection of Elias to both Weber and Durkheim was related to the fact that their understanding of human condition was dominated by a kind of abstraction that appears to present concepts such as “actor”, “system”, “individual” or “society” as substantives, i.e., as if those categories were isolated objects in a state of rest. This “intellectual trap”, according to him, led to a widely-held belief that “there must be a borderline or partition between what may be designated as individual and what [may be] designated as social” (see Elias 1984, 108). In order to approach human subjectivity, I will adopt a position according to which feelings and actions, as well as our aesthetic judgments, cannot be interpreted outside of complex interdependencies of networks and chains in which each individual find himself or herself – precisely as Elias suggested. If researchers are to understand an aesthetic judgment as an “act of creating meaning from within the act of creating itself” (Given 2008, 11), they should proceed from connections and relationships and work out from there, rather than consider beauty and other aesthetic categories as some mysterious autonomous phenomena of the human spirit. The actor-network theory of Latour and Callon teaches us to bypass dualities between individuals and society; I will therefore seek to avoid studying the individual as an independent autonomous self (whose subjectivity can be studied as a “closed box”) by examining networks through which a sense of independence of individuals has been achieved and sustained. However, my methodology will differ from actor-network theorists in two critical aspects. First, I will insist on asymmetry within the interdependency network, meaning that interdependency does not constrain actors in the same way. And second, I will put a greater stress on human actors than on non-human actors, mainly for their intentional powers and the unique forms of agency they exhibit (e.g., aesthetic agency), which allow them to constantly redefine reality and translate their novel ideas into actions. However, researchers must always remain aware that the actions of human actors cannot blow away already existing social structures like dust in the wind.

According to Elias, the duty of sociology is “to make the individuals of any association understandable to themselves and in relation to one another” and to highlight “the mechanisms of interdependences, which from a figuration develops” (Elias cited in Quintaneiro 2006). Thus it is important not only to study contemporary configurations but also configurations that have changed or disappeared, for “any human relation carries

within it something of the times when individuals from other societies were conceived only as strangers, and in many cases not even as human beings" (Elias cited in Quintaneiro 2006). To support this assertion of the interrelationship and interdependence between social and individual structures, I will look at changes in aesthetic sensibilities towards urban and natural environments at certain critical moments of Switzerland's modern history.

Elias was intent on illustrating how people often remain largely unaware of the complex interdependencies in which they are situated, or of the historical conditions in which these interdependencies take place. He argued that we need to see ourselves also from a long-term perspective (*long durée*) and that many of the limitations of social science derive from its failure to acknowledge this fact. He presents his point in the following manner:

"I once read the story of a group of people who climbed higher and higher in an unknown and very high tower. The first generation got as far as the fifth storey, the second reached the seventh, the third the tenth. In the course of time their descendants attained the hundredth storey. Then the stairs gave way. The people established themselves on the hundredth storey. With the passage of time they forgot that their ancestors had ever lived on lower floors and how they had arrived at the hundredth floor. They saw the world and themselves from the perspective of the hundredth floor, without knowing how people had arrived there. They even regarded the ideas they formed from the perspective of their floor as universal human ideas" (Elias 1992, 135).

The idea is that our contemporary ideas are not history-independent. As an example, world time is a contemporary idea that has become necessary to the co-ordination and functioning of most of the contemporary social networks or systems. Most people take time and timing for granted "as part of our everyday subjectivity, and often remain inattentive to the fact that the 'working day' and our whole sense of the measurement of time is a modern social construction that would be entirely alien to people living in pre-modern societies" (see van Iterson et al. 2002 p.xv). As Elias argues, "We have slipped into an ever-present sense of time. It has become part of our person. As such it becomes self-evident. It seems that we cannot experience the world otherwise" (Elias 1992, 162).

Like time, beauty can become 'invisible' to us or can be taken for granted. By solely focusing on the here and now, we can easily forget how our understanding of beauty, like many other aspects of our subjectivity, represents a figurational development which emerged in particular societal conditions. This is why, in order to investigate the

historical and, above all, spatial circumstances²³ which shaped individuals' understanding of beauty, my study will include both an analysis of action and an analysis of meaning. The historical analysis will consist in examining the historical documents and actions of some major urban actors in the realm of spatial planning, culture and politics in terms of their aesthetic sensibilities towards inhabited environments. Anyone who studies the evolution of urban space in Switzerland will notice that a variety of urban actors assigned great importance to aesthetic questions. From the 18th century onward, we can trace how the Swiss have systematically used aesthetics for political and ideological purposes, as well as to develop tourism.

I will thus provide some examples of how aesthetic agency influenced politics regarding spatial planning on one hand, and the residential practices of 'small' actors on the other. This will also help me better understand how urban space influences individuals' aesthetic judgments and how, in turn, their actions are guided by the aesthetic dimension. The idea is to demonstrate that this is not only a phenomenon that emerged only in the background of a particular historical conditions, but rather, that it is a universal capacity of every human endowed with subjectivity. In order to understand how the aesthetic dimension shapes individual's understanding of the world today and how it continues to strongly influence their actions, I conducted a series of qualitative interviews with residents of the Swiss canton of Vaud. In the following pages, I will explain how this method was constructed and how the interviews were organized.

Action and Discourse on Action

The fundamental difference between the natural and social sciences is that the latter have to take human beliefs, interests and intentions into account. At first glance, this fact

²³ Studies have revealed that people have an overall preference for natural environments over artificial environments (Nasar 1983; R. Kaplan and Kaplan 1989) and the addition of natural material to urban environments tends to dramatically increase the area's aesthetic appeal (Thayer and Atwood 1978). These studies can be criticized. For instance, the apparent consensus on preference for habitat may be in fact that samples were taken from people of similar background and experiences (Ruso, Renninger, and Atzwanger 2003, 286). Indeed, the inquiries focused on the similarities between the participants, not their differences. Some studies have shown that landscape preferences differed according to age and gender (Lyons 1983; Heft 1988) or according to one's occupation (Gómez-Limón and Fernández 1999; Brush, Chenoweth, and Barman 2000). Eibl-Eibesfeldt, the founder of human ethnology, added to the environmental aesthetics theory (1984) by describing the human aesthetic condition globally as being phytophilic (having a strong psychological and behavioral affinity to green plants), and hydrophilic (having a strong psychological and behavioral affinity to water). However, this kind of finding does not take into consideration the full complexity of the human aesthetic experience and its deep social groundedness.

might appear to be a disadvantage: first, because people's beliefs, interests and intentions can change and are not always thought-through or easily articulated. As Schultz noted, "the knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life is not homogeneous; it is (1) incoherent, (2) only partially clear, and (3) not at all free from contradictions" (Schuetz 1944). Indeed, humans may consider incompatible positions as being equally valid (i.e., they may exhibit some sort of cognitive dissonance), and their actions can still be guided by these cognitions even if they are contradictory. In this sense, limiting the study of the social world to observable human actions only comes with a great risk of neglecting the mechanisms that govern these actions. Since "human action is intrinsically meaningful" and arises as "the product of a continuous, ongoing, process of experiencing, ordering, classifying and interpreting, (...) it is the investigation of these meaning making processes that must become the main topic of any sociological investigation" (Lapenta 2005). Thus, sociological study should include both pragmatics (an analysis of action) and hermeneutics (an analysis of meaning). Humans are social and evaluative animals; therefore, in any given social situation, they are constantly renegotiating and reevaluating a shared definition and their proper understanding of the situation. In this sense, the answers researchers might elicit from them always make reference to the specific social context and processes they are a part of, which include a constant renegotiation of social identities and interpretations of social events, as Goffman has demonstrated (Goffman 1981; see also Drew and Wootton 1988). The second problem of social sciences lies in the irreproducible character of the observed phenomena. Social actions are unique and irreproducible in their entirety — a fact already stated by Heraclitus. However, the uniqueness of social interactions does not mean they cannot be analyzed. It is precisely because human actions are *spatialized* that we can study and compare them to other *spatialized* human actions. Every time we isolate certain criteria to compare interactions between humans, we do it by isolating spatial substances, which allows us to make such a comparison.

Us and Them

Another fundamental issue for each researcher concerns the production of knowledge. I will adopt the position where I consider that both "the observers" and "the observed" are active in the process of producing knowledge. Social scientists are not the only ones to carry knowledge of society and social phenomena (although it should be noted that they often have a wider systematic understanding of them); Indeed, ordinary lay individuals are entitled to provide their own explanations of what they are doing. The role of the social scientist is not simply to validate his or her understanding or hypothesis

on the actors being studied, but rather, it is to validate it *with* them. In this process, the agency of a researcher²⁴ is not to be bracketed either, but rather foregrounded any time a (new) question arises — First, because the “practice of bracketing in research, from its origins in phenomenology, has resulted in its frequent reduction to a formless technique, value stance, or black-box term” (Gearing 2004); And second, because the prior knowledge and hypothesis of the researcher should be made explicit and clearly available to critique. As Gadamer argued, we cannot free ourselves from the various motivations and presuppositions — conscious and unconscious, hidden or vague — which are “at play determining us” (1981). [The researchers] should not try to getbracket their own cognition and prejudgements, but rather use them as the building blocks for the acquisition of new knowledge (Gadamer 1976). Instead of considering my scientific colleagues as “us” and the rest of society as “them”, I argue for the anticipatory kind of ‘we’ sociology, as advocated by Elias:

[A] predominantly descriptive approach in sociology or history stops short at the point where the people one is trying to understand are perceived merely as people in the third person. Only if the researcher advances further, to the point where he perceives the people he is studying as human beings like himself — the sameplane on which the actual experience of the people studied, their first-person perspective, becomes accessible — can he approach a realistic understanding (Elias 1983, 211).

In Gadamer’s view (Palmer 1969, 165), a researcher is an “inquiring subject” who “encounters” the subject matter “through a questioning responsiveness”. In a constant position of self-questioning, he or she stays open to subject matter and thus allows himself or herself to be “interrogated by the ‘subject matter’ itself”. This was precisely what I experienced during my study.

The Interviews and Selection of Participants

The principal method I used to investigate the aesthetic experience of people living in Lausanne and its metropolitan region was a fairly standard method: the interview. The protocol involved a very short explanation of the purpose of the study followed by a classic verbal semi-open interview and photo-elicited interview. The conversation was

²⁴ As for the subjectivity of the researcher in regards to the choice of photographs, Sylvain Malfroy suggests that researchers should rather speak of the “engaged image” instead of the “subjective

recorded and became a 'text' that was coded, interpreted, explored and critically analyzed. Since the linear character of the written dissertation requires that even simultaneous eventualities be reported sequentially, it is extremely hard to represent the circular process through which the theories, hypotheses and results mutually nurtured and influenced each other. However, it must be noted that my choice to interview the participants is consistent with postulates of the "grounded theory", which states that the theory is generated and developed at the same time that data is collected (Glaser and Strauss 2009; Blanchet 2007, 15). Grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998) as a *modus operandi*²⁵ became my basic methodological guideline, and it was accompanied by a critical discourse analysis that is both interpretative and explanatory (Fairclough 2013).

There were only two criteria for selecting participants for this study. The first criterion was that the participant needed to be a resident of the Swiss canton of Vaud and had to have been born in Switzerland (or have lived most of their life in Switzerland). The idea behind this was to diminish trans-cultural influences as much as possible and test my hypothesis of whether inhabitants' aesthetic judgements are strongly influenced by the degree of urbanity they choose or prefer to have as their residential environment. This leads us to the second criterion. Participants were chosen according to their residential zone and whether it corresponded to a certain gradient of urbanity, as defined previously (dense city, suburb, peri-urban, hypo-urban, etc.). Typologizing individuals according to their actual residential environment was a rather tricky task because it raised a very important question on whether the residential space corresponds to the inhabited space. I will address this issue later on in this study. For the time being, it is important to foreground the basic logic behind the participants' selection. Age, gender, educational background, occupation and economic status were taken into account only to diversify my corpus, without dispersing my primary intentions. This diversification had another purpose: It was meant to allow me to perturb the initial theoretical system and eventually challenge it.

The Semi-Open Interview

The first part of the interview included verbal semi-open questions on the topic. The questions were simple, open-ended and intended to elicit subjective and meaningful responses. The participants were clearly instructed that I was not seeking any 'correct'

image" in order to avoid any doubts regarding the reality of the captured phenomenon (Roeck 2013, 122).

²⁵ The approach consisted of a series of strategies that can be adopted to "code" – break down, examine, compare conceptualise and categorise texts and discourses (see Lapenta 2005, 103-8).

responses or any particular answers and therefore they were encouraged to freely provide their own interpretation of the issue. I tried to make an appeal to the lived experience of each participant, his or her own logic and rationale. Thus, participants were asked to reflect upon their own experiences and the experiences of others in ways that seldom occur in their everyday lives. Some of them specifically noted that discussing their own judgments was not an easy exercise. This in-depth exploration of a particular topic is also known as “intensive interviewing”. “The interviewer is there to listen, to observe with sensitivity, and to encourage the person to respond” while “the participant does most of the talking” (Charmaz 2014, 25). The interview was intended to resemble a conversation, but not a symmetrical one since I tried to restrict my guidance to the maximum. My decision to insist on the general linearity of the protocol and to repeat the same set of questions to each participant came from my intention of carrying out a comparative analysis. The interview was conducted in French and structured as follows:

Consignes initiales : Pensez-vous que ce que vous trouvez beau ou laid est important dans les choix que vous faites dans votre vie ? Qu’est-ce la beauté pour vous ? Qu’est-ce que la laideur pour vous ?

Guide thématique

1. Niveau d’importance de la dimension esthétique : Qu’est ce qu’il faut pour qu’un espace habité soit beau ? (Quels sont des facteurs qui font qu’un espace habité soit beau ?) Pensez-vous que la dimension esthétique joue un rôle important dans l’expérience d’un lieu de résidence ? Pensez-vous que la beauté joue un rôle important dans l’attachement à un espace ? Pensez-vous que le jugement esthétique joue un rôle important dans le choix de l’environnement résidentiel ?

2. L’environnement résidentiel de l’interviewé : Avez-vous choisi l’endroit où vous habitez maintenant ? Étés vous heureux en habitant ici ? Pouvez-vous me décrire votre environnement résidentiel, votre quartier ? Qu’est qui est beau ? Qu’est qui est laid ? Pensez-vous que tout le monde partage vos jugements sur ce qui est beau ou laid ? Pourquoi ?

3. Fabrication du jugement esthétique: Comment cela se fait que vous trouviez cela beau ou laid ? Comment pensez-vous que votre goût s’est fabriqué ? Avez-vous toujours trouvé cela beau ? (Avez-vous pensé que c’était beau quand vous aviez 20 ans ?). Si la réponse est négative : dans votre histoire personnelle, quelle est la période qui a influencé le plus votre goût ? Pouvez-vous me décrire l’espace résidentiel de votre enfance ? Avez-vous eu un rapport positif ou négatif par rapport à cet espace ?

Utiliser les relances pendant le déroulement des énoncés de l'interviewé pour souligner, synthétiser ou demander une précision. Combiner des interventions différentes du type :

- écho : répéter ou reformuler un ou plusieurs énoncés référentiels du discours de l'interviewé. Ex. C'est beau cela ? Cette maison est laide ?
- reflet : Ex. Vous trouvez cela beau ? Vous pensez que cette maison est laide ?
- Interprétation : Vous pensez donc qu'avant des gens faisaient plus d'attention à l'esthétique ?
- Interrogation référentielle : Ex. Vous avez un exemple ? Vous pensez à un élément précis ?

4. Conclusion de l'entretien : Demander à la personne interviewée si elle n'a pas autre chose à ajouter, ou si elle souhaite aborder un sujet qui ne l'a pas été.

The second part of the protocol included a photo-questionnaire.

A Photography as a Method

As Howard Becker observed in his influential article (1974), photography and sociology have approximately the same birthdate, around 1839, and were products of the same social events. It is not a coincidence that this period corresponds to the birth and expansion of great European and American cities that, more than ever before, raised issues in terms of the representation of inhabited environments. Classical techniques of spatial representations (writing, painting, cartography) could not catch up with the speed of city expansion, and therefore something, a new media, was needed to complement human understanding of the rapidly changing world. This is why photography (and some time later, film) became a popular and powerful tool for the exploration of society.

When Jacob Riis (1901) published his photo-journal on the miserable living conditions in New York slums in the 1890s, his work immediately led to many reforms and changes in working-class housing. An important number of newspaper articles, published prior to Riis' publication, had failed to convey the urgent message and it was not until the introduction of photography that sympathy was raised for the individuals living in these slums. The immediate success of Riis's reportage lies maybe in a certain "proximity without presence" provided by the photographic image, accompanied by an "instantaneity" that is rivaled only by the cinematographic image. It is in this sense that Sartre talks of the transparency of a photograph, meaning that each photograph is an analogon providing us with access to the referential space represented by it (2004). In a similar way, Roland Barthes writes of the impossibility of distinguishing a photograph from its referent:

“Show your photographs to someone — he will immediately show you his: "Look, this is my brother; this is me as a child," etc.; the Photograph is never anything but an antiphon of "Look," "See," "Here it is"; points a finger at certain vis-a-vis, and cannot escape this pure deictic language. This is why, insofar as it is licit to speak of a photograph, it seemed to me just as improbable to speak of the Photograph” (Barthes 1981, 5).

From the beginning, photography was perceived as a medium of realism that “depended upon the medium’s technical character and on the social praxis and discursive context determining it. (...) Even digital photography, which planted the seed of ontological doubt into the heart of the image, has not radically changed our everyday interaction with images” (Kelsey and Stimson 2008, 196). Nevertheless, from the very beginning of photography, there has been a persistent myth that the camera merely records whatever is in front of it, which leads to the common belief that photography is in some way ‘objective’. As popular idiom tells us: “a picture is worth a thousand words”, and many photographers seem to think that the meaning is already in the image — that there is no need to verbalize its meaning. This is why, according to Becker, photographic exploration of society is so often intellectually thin. Many photographers simply think that becoming familiar with sociological prose is too time-consuming and continue to rely on what might be considered as “intuition”. Becker argues that photographers do actually draw on theories, but not scientific ones. Instead they rely on “lay theories” of everyday life that come from the intellectual and artistic circles they move in. Furthermore, he argues that without some kind of theory scientists could begin shooting almost anything they see in a chosen situation, trying to cover what whatever seems in a common-sense way to be worth looking at. However, “the result is likely to be incoherent, visually as well as cognitively”. This is why Becker argues that some initial theory is indispensable if we are interested in producing any sort of knowledge on the phenomenon we choose to observe. He expresses his view in the following words:

“A sociological theory, whether large scale abstract theory or a specific theory about some empirical phenomenon, is a set of ideas with which you can make sense of a situation while you photograph it. The theory tells you when an image contains information of value, when it communicates something worth communicating. It furnishes the criteria by which worthwhile data and statements can be separated from those that contain nothing of value, that do not increase our knowledge of society” (1974).

It is clearly understood by now that epistemology and methodology, as two sides of the same coin in any scientific inquiry, intrinsically nourish each other and depend on one another. “Epistemological assumptions affect the types of methods that we choose, just as the methods that we use — their strengths and their limitations — act on our ways of thinking about the way we generate valid social knowledge” (Stanczak 2007, 9). To make photography more scientifically ‘dense’, researchers using photography must become conscious of the theory behind the use of these images.

Becker argues that at a certain moment in time, there was a divorce between sociology and photography. “Sociology became more scientific and less openly political, photography became more personal, more artistic, and continued to be engaged politically. Not surprisingly, then, the two modes of social exploration have ceased to have very much to do with one another” (1974). As Harper noticed, from the 1920s to the 1960s, there was no visual sociology (Harper 1988). Today many (social) scientists have distanced themselves from radical positivism, which postulates that concepts and objects of knowledge are already there as they are, with the researcher’s task being simply to (objectively) discover them by refining his or her methods of observation (see Lévy 2013, 224). Instead, within the contemporary episteme, each student of social reality ‘constructs’ a scientific artifact, allowing “the mind and the world [to] jointly make up the mind and the world”, as Hilary Putnam metaphorically writes in his celebrated work “Reason, Truth and History” (1981, xi). This accent on the individual point of view, as well as the “spatial shift” in social sciences, are perhaps two main reasons that explain sociology’s renewed interest in photography.

Today, photographs have become an important research tool for the exploration of society across a range of disciplines (anthropology, psychology, sociology, architecture and geography). Although the “visual shift” indicates a shift in emphasis in the humanities and social sciences towards “the visible” (Thornes 2004; Jay 2002), scientists still lack the conceptual frameworks which would relate it to sociological theory (Burri 2012). This is perhaps because sociological research has been a “word-based” discipline, and the capacity of photographs to provide us with substantial knowledge has been questioned, despite the fact, observed by many, that the process of envisioning is a key element in the way individuals engage with and make sense of the world (see for example Crang 1997; 1996). Theories of psychophysiological arousal also assign major importance to the visual properties of environments as factors affecting interest and other aspects of activation (Berlyne 1971; Kuller 1976, cited in Ulrich 1981).

Although environmental perception is multi-sensory, and all our senses are important, I focused mainly on vision, by far the most important sense in terms of yielding

information about our environments (see Ulrich 1981). Numerous studies have supported the use of photographs as surrogates for real views and environments (Stamps 1991; Zube, Pitt, and Anderson 1975; Shafer, Richards, and Richards 1974). Since visual techniques and sociological inquiry are compatible in nature, mixed methods have been widely used in a variety of disciplines. It therefore seems appropriate to use a research method that combines classical semi-open structured interviews with a technique that engages people's visual and imaginative apparatus.

According to Hurworth, "photo-interviewing in its various forms can be a particularly powerful tool²⁶ for the researcher. It can challenge participants, provide nuances, trigger memories, lead to new perspectives and explanations and help to avoid researcher misinterpretation" (2004, 76). The difference between interviews with images and interviews with words alone lies in the way we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation. "The parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information." Hence, photographs "evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words", and photo-elicitation interviews reveal different kinds of information (Harper, 2002). This is why photography, as a 'surrogate' for an actual scene, is of relevant interest when it comes to research methodology.

The Meaning of Photographs

Although photo-interviewing²⁷ was used in early anthropological research (Hurworth 2004), the use of photographs to provoke a response was established as a research methodology and named "photo-elicitation" interviewing (PEI) in a paper published by the photographer and researcher John Collier Jr. (1957). Together with his son, he published a classic text, "Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method" (J. Collier and Collier 1986), which became the milestone of systematic and analytical investigations of image-based methodologies. Collier's team of researchers did photo-elicitation interviews as well as non-photographic interviews with the same groups of participants and introduced photographs as a valid and useful method for collecting data. They concluded that the photos sharpened the informants' memory and reduced areas of misunderstanding:

"The characteristics of the two methods of interviewing can be simply stated. The material obtained with photographs was precise and at times even encyclopedic; the control interviews were less structured, rambling,

²⁶ For some limitations of the method, see (Becker 1978; Blyton 1987; Templin 1978; Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001).

and freer in association. Statements in the photo interviews were in direct response to the graphic probes and different in character as the content of the pictures differed, whereas the character of the control interviews seemed to be governed by the mood of the informants. (...) The pictures elicited longer and more comprehensive interviews but at the same time helped subjects overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews” (J. Collier 1957, 856-8).

The Colliers described photographs as projective tools with the potential to constitute a communicative path into the lives and worlds of the observers through qualitatively informed open-ended interview. They argued that images encouraged “people to take lead in the inquiry, making full use of their expertise,” and readily “invited open expression while maintaining concrete and explicit reference points. (...) The researcher is now asking questions of the photographs, and the informants are now assistants in exploring the answers in the realities there depicted” (Collier and Collier 1986, 105). The qualities of this method, such as reshaped and refocused communication between the interviewer and interviewee, non-directivity of the discourse, and a higher level of engagement by the interviewee with the themes and subjects of the interview, were confirmed by authors that have used the method (see Margolis and Pauwels 2011, 202-13; Banks 2002; Harper 2002). The open-ended methodological approach, with the aim of granting the interviewee more space for personal interpretations and responses, finds a very fruitful expression in photographs. Unlike a verbal exchange that imposes a meaning by itself, photographs acquire a specific meaning only through their interpretation by an observer (see Lapenta 2005). Like the world itself, a photograph is never a question *per se* – a question must always be ‘completed’ by the observer.

This communicative ambiguity of photographs was first acknowledged by Gombrich in his idea of conceptual “incompleteness” of the image (Gombrich 1960, 58-59). He argued that image was not structured enough to bear a determined meaning by itself and needed some sort of definition (a caption or label) that could clarify the meaning of the message. This argument was later developed by Barthes in his description of the “polysemous” value of photographs (Barthes 1964), who argued that photographic messages are so symbolically incomplete that they cannot serve to convey a determined meaning without a “verbal anchorage” (see Barthes 1993, 37). The Colliers shared the same position and argued that “ultimately, the only way we can use the full record of the camera is through the projective interpretation by the native” (Collier and Collier 1986, 108).

²⁷ Harper (2002) and Hurworth (2004) offer more recent accounts of the method.

Though now almost all researchers agree on the projective values of photographs, there are still important disagreements about the mechanisms driving us to attribute meaning to the photographs (see Lapenta 2005). The fundamental idea of semioticians, who saw meaning as embedded within the sign structure and its relationship to other signs, was contested by authors such as Voloshinov (1973), and later on by Burgin (1982), Sekula (1982) and Tagg (1988), who saw meaning as “the product of the interaction of the user and the sign within a context” (Lapenta 2005, 34). Thus the emphasis is less on the semiotic analysis of the image’s ontological characteristics, but rather on the different uses and interpretative practices of photographs, which are always socially, and thus spatially, situated. “A photograph can mean one thing in one context and something else entirely in another” (Tagg 1988, 63). In this sense, Sekula supplements: “The photograph is an incomplete utterance, it is a message that depends on some external matrix of conditions and presuppositions for its readability” (Sekula 1982, 37). My position is that photographs have indeed the projective character, but as ‘aesthetic objects’ they also have the *medial* character (we see *with* them). All this will be explained later in the chapter “Aesthetic space”.

For Becker, visual sociology, documentary photography, and photojournalism are social constructions whose meaning arises in the contexts, i.e. different spaces of distinctive photographic work:

“(I)f we consider, for example, researchers who want to use photographic materials for social science purposes, they often appear confused. The pictures visual sociologists make so resemble those made by others, who claim to be doing documentary photography or photojournalism, that they wonder whether they are doing anything distinctive. They try to clear up the confusion by looking for the essential differences, the defining features of each of the genres, as if it were just a matter of getting the definitions right. Such labels do not refer to Platonic essences whose meaning can be discovered by profound thought and analysis, but rather are just what people have found it useful to make of them. We can learn what people have been able to do using documentary photography or photojournalism as a cover, but we cannot find out what the terms really mean. Their meaning arises in the organisation they are used in, out of the joint action of all the people involved in those organisations, and so varies from time to time and from place to place. Just as paintings get their meaning in a world of painters, collectors, critics, and curators, so photographs get their

meaning from the way the people involved with them understand them, use them, and thereby attribute meaning to them” (Becker 2008).

Lapenta concludes that “(a)rt photography, portrait photography, news reportage, advertising and fashion illustration, erotic photography, the photography of subcultures, geographical survey photography, astronomical photography, physics/ biology/ documentary photography, police photography, and photographs for sociological research then acquire their meaning on the basis of specific practices of use, or institutional discourses, (...) by specific users at a specific time and place (context) for certain purposes” (Lapenta 2005, 37-8). Lapenta might not be taking into account the specificity of each of domains (for it would mean to negate the specificity of the photograph itself), but the important message is that there is not any societal domain that should be *a priori* dismissed as irrelevant for the scientific inquiry.

Contemporary post-semiotic analysis goes beyond interpretation of the photographs according to their structural characteristics, and searches for “the realities depicted in the photographs (...) that influenced and favoured (in and through the interaction) the resolution of the photographs’ ambiguity in a literal interpretation” (Lapenta 2005, 38). Or to put it differently, the aim of photo-elicitation is the critical analysis of how and why some people use and interpret a photograph or a set of photographs in one way or another. The meanings and values of a photograph are considered as socially established and spatially interpreted and elaborated. This is precisely the approach I chose for the purpose of this study.

A Punctum as an Analogon

In his 1979 essay on the semiology of the Eiffel Tower, Roland Barthes discusses how monuments create meaning in everyday life. For him the famous Parisian icon is pure empty sign which is “ineluctable, because it means everything”, and therefore attracts meaning like “a lightning rod attracts thunderbolts” (Barthes 1997, 165-6). Photographs too act as signs *through* which individuals produce their own imaginative spaces. Now I do not have to agree with Barthes when he claims that the Eiffel Tower is an empty sign for this claim would devoid it from all virtuality. However, his writings helps us understand how a photograph might provide an access to some deeper meanings that inhabited environment have for each, which in turn can help researchers expose forces that structure it. Here it is useful to introduce two well-known concepts of Barthes related to photographic image expressed in the Latin words *studium* and *punctum*.

The studium represents the world of codes and conventionalized context. It includes the range of meanings shared by everyone belonging to a certain cultural context (e.g. education, formal training, academic and intellectual community). Its meaning can be taken without a particular effort, or “thinking”. In the words of Barthes “the studium is that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interests, of inconsequential taste: I like / I don’t like. The studium is of the order of liking, not loving; it mobilises a half desire, a demi-volition” (Barthes 1981, 27).

The punctum is the element which rises from the scene and pricks the spectator. It is a ‘detail’ which changes the reading of a photograph and “give the spectator up”. It is a door into the unknown where the deeper meaning of the photograph can be revealed – the meaning which is intensely private since the punctum is always a personal addition - a pure subjectivity. Once perceived, the punctum has a power of expansion – “while remaining a ‘detail’ it fills the whole picture” (Barthes 1981, 45).

Thus a researcher should explore, on one side, what reveals itself as identical in multiplicity of different point of views including the social mechanisms that influence the construction of an intersubjectivity, and on another, particularities of each single individual as such. The two discontinuous elements of a photography, studium and punctum, leads to a true purpose of photography, that is “to inform, to represent, to surprise, to course, to signify, to provoke desire” (Barthes 1981, 28) and finally to learn more about ourselves and the world we make part of. Recognition of subjectivity leads to recognition of the Individual as a fundamental spatial actor and recognition of the individual actions aside the collective ones.

Preparing and Conducting Photo-elicitation Interview: Theory as a Sampling Device

The advantages of photo-elicitation are based on the method’s ability to “challenge participants, provide nuances, trigger memories, lead to new perspectives and explanations, and help to avoid researcher misinterpretation” (Hurworth cited in , Margolis and Pauwels 2011, 210). According to Epstein et al. (2006), researchers who decide to use photo-elicitation must answer these three basic questions:

1. Who is going to make or select the images to be used in the interviews?
2. What is the content of the images going to be?
3. Where are the images going to be used, and how?

I will therefore try to answer the questions in the following lines.

1. Image production and selection: The photographs can be existing images or can be photographs taken by the researcher or the participants, and opting for one or another possibility represents a methodologically significant decision. In recent decades, participant-driven photographs have been used in many studies,²⁸ with the purpose of reducing “the voyeurism of older models of visual research that allowed ‘us’ to view ‘them’ or provided us with the knowledge of what ‘they’ do and what they are like” (Stanczak 2007, 15). This method is particularly used in ethnographic studies. However, both researcher-driven and participant-driven photographs are primarily “can opener[s]” (Collier and Collier 1986) for deeper reflection and discussion on the topic. For a theory-driven study (as is the case with this study), it seems appropriate to elicit answers by using photographs produced or chosen by the researcher himself or herself (Clark-Ibáñez 2004, 1509), despite the fact that this decision (as any other scientific method) comes with certain limitations²⁹ that must be kept in mind. I therefore decided to use the photographs taken by myself.³⁰

2. Content of images: Coming up with questions and choosing photographs is never a neutral activity. For this reason, I intentionally applied the same methodological and theoretical logic to both the selection of the questions of the classic verbal interview and the photographs for the photo-elicited interview. Since the verbal interview was presented as a series of questions, starting with more general questions and moving on to more specific questions, the photo interview was prepared with the same logic in mind. The photographs at the beginning represent five main urban types from a distance that gave the viewer a relatively general overview. I then moved down to the neighborhood level, the street level and the single-family house level. In this way, I wanted to test the hypothesis that different aesthetic properties emerge at different levels of the urban

²⁸ (See Clark-Ibáñez 2004; Margolis and Pauwels 2011, 206-10)

²⁹ Dewey puts it very well: “If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist. There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence” (Dewey 2005, 77).

³⁰ A great majority of researchers rely on photographs taken or chosen by themselves (Lapenta 2005, 84). According to Epstein et al. (2006), there are several factors that influence researchers’ decisions to use their own photographs and these studies shared several characteristics: “Researchers who were also professional photographers chose to take the photos” (Collier Jr 2010; Harper 1997); researchers who were guided by particular conceptual frameworks also took their own photographs, as they were aiming to explore particular concepts (Diamond and Hestenes 1996; S. J. Foster, Hoge, and Rosch 2012; Weinger 2013); In addition, researchers who investigated younger children (3-12 years) usually took the photos (Aschermann, Dannenberg, and Schulz 1998; Salmon 2001). Finally, researchers who were exploring particular places (e.g., rural home care) took the photos, as the photos served not only to facilitate conversation but also as a mapping observation to represent particular features of the area (Magilvy et al. 1992”).

system. Anyone who is confronted with the task of photographing a city or any other part of an inhabited environment quickly becomes aware of the great difficulties involved in its representation because of the simple fact that there exist a seemingly infinite number of motives and viewpoints (which themselves are never stable but change according to the time of day, the weather, the season, etc.). Thus, it is indispensable to have an idea (that comes from some theory and hypothesis, even if it is provisional) of what one wants to photograph and why.

It should be understood that the process behind the production of this thesis was far from being a linear sequence of operational steps (question - theory - hypothesis - method), but rather, that it was a cycle in which constant comparisons had to be made between the initial hypothesis and the actual results on the terrain. My choice of photographs was guided with this initial idea: If urbanity, as a combination of density and diversity, influences the structuration of urban space, then its effects should be present at the physical (and thus visually observable) level. The *ideal* of plurality (as opposed to the ideal of uniformity) that is associated with a high level of urbanity should be actualised in a variety of urban and architectural styles that enter into the constitution of urban fabrics. In this sense, I attempted to represent both ideals in the photographs chosen for this study by exploring the heterogeneity and uniformity of the urban environment. However, this task was challenged by the subjectivity of the participants, as the later analysis will demonstrate.

All photographs were taken in the Vaud canton, on the Swiss shores of Lake Geneva (fr. *Lac Léman*) during late spring and early summer in 2015. Apart from the common shots at the street level, particular topographic conditions of the region allowed me to take some photographs from the lake level, offering good visibility of the urban type I was trying to represent. I took all photographs, except the first, with a Nikon D300 (12.3-megapixel semi-professional) camera. Once exported to the computer, the white balance and lens distortion were corrected if necessary. The photographs were sequenced in the following manner:

- The photo-interview begins with a photograph of St. Saphorin village taken from the lake. The village has a population (as of December 2015) of 384. The church with a Gallo-Roman villa and part of the Lavaux vineyard terraces (UNESCO World Heritage Site), is listed as a Swiss Heritage of National Significance, and the entire village of St. Saphorin is part of the Inventory of Swiss Heritage Sites. This allowed the homogeneity of the village to be well preserved since any new construction is strictly controlled by the authorities.

- The 2nd photo represents a high-standing peri-urban zone near Geneva with exclusively single-family houses placed in a natural setting. The photograph was taken from the lakeshore.
- The 3rd photograph is taken from an 'unusual point of view'. It has three planes: there are single-family houses in the foreground, a social-housing building with a tower block in the middleground, and housing blocks with a stadium in the background.
- The 4th photograph was taken from the lake. Two different urban types are represented: On the left side, there is a dense urban tissue with mainly housing, and on the right side, there are three tower housing blocks surrounded by plenty of greenery.
- The 5th photograph represents the cityscape of Lausanne taken from the lake. Since the city of Lausanne is constructed on hilly terrain, the particular topographic conditions allow us to see the city in all its variety of urban and architectural styles. The top of the hill is dominated by the central regional hospital: the CHUV.
- The 6th photograph represents a typical wine property from the region of Morges. There are three separate family houses as well as the old winery, all surrounded by vineyards.
- On the 7th photograph, participants can see a lower-middle class peri-urban zone with semi-detached houses. The estate is situated in a valley near the town of Roche (VD).
- The 8th photograph represents the north part of the Lutry municipality with a variety of housing buildings. Some of them are single family houses, but most are terraced houses or high-standing housing blocks with no more than 3 floors.
- The 9th photograph was taken in the Malley neighborhood in Lausanne, depicting the inner-courtyard of social housing blocks and a tower block in the back. The inner-courtyard was turned into a children's playground.
- The 10th photograph was taken in Lausanne in order to contrast urban styles. In the foreground, there are two single-family houses surrounded, on the left and on the right, by terraced houses. Behind them, a social-housing tower imposes itself on the skyline.
- The center of Lausanne is represented in the 11th photograph, which was taken from the Bessières Bridge. In the center of densely packed urban tissue, we can see the historic Rôtillon neighborhood. The scene has almost no greenery.
- The 12th photograph was taken in a typical middle-class peri-urban zone near Morges. The neighborhood is exclusively residential, and each house has a garage and a garden.
- The 13th photograph was taken at the street level and represents a typical social-housing block near Morges.
- The 14th photograph represents a street in Montreux characterized by a striking stylistic variety. Indeed, there is a 19th century half-timbered house right next to a contemporary concrete building, a 1960s housing building and a belle-epoque residential building.

- The 15th photograph depicts a typical peri-urban house with its well-maintained lawn. The picture is taken from the garden and invites the viewer to project him or herself into the life of the owners.
- The last photograph represents a street in Geneva's rich bourgeois neighborhood, with typical architecture from the end of the 19th century. Some cars are parked along the street and the greenery is almost completely absent from the scene.

3. Use of images: The 16 photographs (40 x 26 cm), printed in color on photographic paper and assembled in a photo-interview kit, were presented to the participants during the interview. The participants were shown a portfolio and were given instructions to comment on the photographs and express their aesthetic judgments. They were also asked to defend their opinions as to why they judged certain scenes or certain elements of the scene in one way or another. The answers were recorded, transcribed and later analyzed.

My fear was that the photographs would not evoke deep reflections from the participants. The risk was that the researcher-driven photographs would not "break the frame" of the participants' view (Harper 2002, 20) because they reflect the researcher's perspective. Nevertheless, since all participants were born in the Vaud region (or spent most of their lives there), familiarity with the environment contributed to the high engagement of most of the participants. In addition, some photographs were taken from an "unusual angle" which, according to Harper (2002, 20; see also Epstein et al. 2006), allowed participants to explore a new view of their social world.



Fig. 3 – Photo 1, Lavaux Vineyard Terraces, © Nicolas Guérin, 2007, Retrieved from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lavaux_côté_Vevey_1.JPG.



Fig. 4 - Photo 2, Lemanic Lake Riviera, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 5 - Photo 3, Lausanne, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 6 - Photo 4, Lausanne, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 7 - Photo 5, Lausanne, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 8 - Photo 6, Morges, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 9 - Photo 7, Roche, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 10 - Photo 8, Lutry, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 11 - Photo 9, Lausanne, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 12 - Photo 10, Lausanne, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 13 - Photo 11, Lausanne, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 14 - Photo 12, Lonay, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 15 - Photo 13, Morges, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 16 - Photo 14, Montreux, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 17 - Photo 15, Denges, 2015, © Mirza Tursić



Fig. 18 - Photo 16, Genève, 2015, © Mirza Tursić

5 Aesthetic space

“It is our presence in the world which multiplies relations. It is we who set up this relationship between this tree and a bit of sky. Thanks to us, that star which has been dead for millennia, that quarter moon, and that dark river are associated in the unity of a landscape.”

Jean-Paul Sartre

It is essential to recognize that human beings' imaginative capacities allow them to surpass the limitations of the actual perceived world. The aesthetic dimension directly involves this capacity, that of the human imaginative consciousness. It is activated in the realm of the virtual, i.e., the realm of the possible. The virtual (lat. *virtus*) thus refers to a reality that exists only in a latent state (fr. *qui n'est qu'en puissance*) (Le Robert 2016). Since each intentional human experience is spatialized, it is possible to investigate the particular spatial structure through which the aesthetic experience occurs. I will call this structure aesthetic space. Studies performed in the field of cognitive psychology found that phenomenal spaces, such as the visual and auditory spaces of humans and other animals, are not Euclidean (Bunge 2006, 246). The aesthetic space is also part of this phenomenal space. It is topological in nature and a product of active imagination — in other words, it is an imaginative space. As a purely subjective space the relations between objects do not necessarily exist independently from the perceiver — indeed, in aesthetic space, objects are related solely in the ways that individuals imagine they are related. In the following section, I will explore the nature and structure of the aesthetic space as a genuine life-space through which the world becomes a pure subjective representation.

The Production of Aesthetic Space

The production of space reflects not only the human capacity to connect and separate, but also the capacity to surpass the conditions of everyday existence. Koehler's experiments from the early twentieth century showed that a chimpanzee can be trained to stand on a box to reach something, but it will not use that box as a seat or for any other purpose. In the same way, a tree branch that has become a stick for a monkey, ceases to be perceived as a tree branch (see Merleau-Ponty 1963). These examples illustrate that primates cannot freely choose which property of an object should be taken as relevant in a given situation. In contrast, human beings can see a single thing under the plurality of its aspects, meaning that we can freely transform the meaning of the real. This capacity of humans to freely choose which aspect of the object should emerge as relevant, i.e., our capacity to inhabit not just the actual world, but also possible other worlds, is a necessary condition for the emergence of aesthetics as a societal dimension. Thus, human existence involves an oscillating involvement with, and detachment from, the world. This capacity of humans to position the world as a synthetic totality (as a whole) and to step away from it in one and the same act was observed by a variety of philosophers, thinkers and scientists, who expressed their observations in various ways. It is precisely what Kant was referring to when he coined the famous term "disinterested interest" as being the specificity of aesthetic experience; what Schopenhauer had in mind when he spoke of the suspension of Will to Power; and what Vygotsky alluded to when he wrote of the capacity to step back from one's awareness of reality unfolding. The fact that there should be some kind of space that allows humans to produce these imagined spatialities was suggested by one of the interviewees:

"Je pense que c'est parce que ça crée une sorte d'espace quelque part. C'est une question intéressante parce que j'allais dire que ça crée une sorte d'espace virtuel, comme ça, ou on s'échappe vers un autre, vers un ailleurs temporel." - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)³¹

The production of the aesthetic space includes the human capacity to nihilate the actual perceived world from a certain *point of view*. The participants of my study repeatedly engaged in this capacity for creating imaginary spaces. Every time I presented to them a photograph of an urban environment, they immediately started to examine the scene by searching for aesthetic objects or group of objects that would allow them to enter into

the virtual space of human imagination. Once such an object was isolated, they actively engaged in producing a particular relationship that fused the two apparently distinct realms: the actual space of human perception and the virtual space of human imagination. Indeed, when individuals observed a city and claimed it to be beautiful, that city became an analogon of virtual spatialities, allowing the observer to imagine different actions that would happen within the city, i.e., to imagine a lifestyle related to the city. The particularity of aesthetic attention, in contrast to practical involvement, is that the individual in question creates relations between without really being concerned with their actuality. The imagined relations might correspond to actual relations, but this does not appear to be of fundamental importance. David and Urs provided us with examples of such a situation:

“- Ah [le quartier] est assez incroyable. Avec des anciennes fermes, des anciennes maisons. (...) Il n’y a quasiment rien de laid, à mes yeux, à part d’un toit d’éternit et quelques cabanes de jardin que je trouve pas très esthétiques. Autrement non. C’est très plaisant. Il y a la route qui est laide.

- Qu’est-ce qui est beau ?

- Ces anciennes fermes. Les maisons autour parce que ce sont des maisons qui me plaisent, qui ont deux étages. Il y a une petite maison, un peu plus cossue comme ça. On peut imaginer que peut-être qu’il n’y avait pas un fermier qui était là, mais peut-être un médecin de l’époque ou un notaire, un avocat. Enfin, quelqu’un qui avait un peu plus d’argent que les paysans du coin. Mais ça n’a rien d’un manoir. C’est une jolie maison ancienne.” - David, 65, périurbain (ville)

“[Photo 5] C’est un beau village. Je pense que c’est le genre d’architecture qui suggère un peu quelque chose de positif parce que, ça ne correspond peut-être à rien du tout dans les relations actuelles ou même historiques, j’en sais rien, mais ça donne un peu le sentiment de communauté, parce qu’il y a des gens qui se sont vraiment rapprochés pour vivre ensemble.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

If aesthetic pleasure comes from a certain understanding of the aesthetic object, this implies that every aesthetic experience requires a sort of active participation of the observer, in which their imaginative attention enables them to see a certain object in a certain way. In the aesthetic mode, individuals exhibit a sort of double intentionality, in which they see the aesthetic object from two different angles: the first, which they can perceptually be aware of, is built around the knowledge they have of the object’s qualities, and the second, borrows meaning from another object. This double intentionality, as Scruton argues, shapes our response in such a way that “what is absent

³¹ The names of the interviewees have been changed. Age, actual residential environment, as well as childhood residential environment (in brackets) were not modified.

and imagined is conjured through what is present and believed” (Scruton 2007, 249). Thus, beliefs and imaginings, i.e., the actual and the virtual, co-exist with a common focus, informing one another. The order that allows this co-existence is precisely the aesthetic space.

A famous study by Gaston Bachelard on the poetics of the house, its interior places and its outdoor context serves as a good starting point to illuminate the character of this space. Bachelard saw a house as a felicitous space, and his aim was to examine the images he loved.³² In order to understand the full depth of such images, Bachelard borrowed the following comparison from Carl Jung: “We have to describe and to explain a building, the upper story of which was erected in the nineteenth century; the ground floor dates from the sixteenth century, and a careful examination of the masonry discloses the fact that it was reconstructed from a dwelling-tower of the eleventh century. In the cellar, we discover Roman foundation walls, and under the cellar a filled-in cave, in the floor of which stone tools are found, and remnants of glacial fauna in the layers below. That would be a sort of picture of our mental structure.” (Bachelard and Jolas 1994 p.xxxii). This comparison has limitations since the foundations of the mind are active, and not inert as in the case of a building. However, despite these limitations, Bachelard used this image to demonstrate how a house can be a tool for the analysis of the human subjectivity. He believed that in its “countless alveoli”, a house becomes the abode of a human half-dreaming consciousness, i.e., of reverie.³³ However, our capacity to actively contemplate the inhabited environment goes far beyond the private space:

“- Pour moi la lumière c’est un facteur important. Donc la lumière, ça signifie aussi quand même dégagement ! Il faut qu’elle puisse accéder, la lumière. Donc, si c’est trop dense, si c’est trop serré, ils sont les uns contre les autres. Bah non... la lumière. (...)

- Et ce dégagé, ça vous crée quoi comme sentiment?

- De la liberté. Mais j’ai besoin d’une ouverture.

- De la liberté ?

- Une ouverture. On peut bien respirer. Je ne me sens pas complètement rabougrie. C’est une ouverture, j’ai besoin de ça. Je peux me mettre ici. Je peux regarder les nuages. Mais je ne pourrais pas si un bâtiment-là me bouchait tout. (...) Ça me donne la possibilité de rêver.” - Martha, 65, ville (campagne)

³² Authors like Juhani Pallasmaa, Peter Zumthor or Christopher Alexander specifically wrote about this kind of experience.

³³ The word “daydreaming” has connotations of absent-mindedness (or of being pleasantly lost in one’s thoughts), whereas Bachelard used the word “reverie” in the sense that it involves “active imagination”. This is why it may be better to use the term “reverie”, as it appears originally in French, rather than “daydreaming”.

“[Photo 11] Alors là, ça me plaît bien parce qu'il y a des lieux de rencontre. Ça, c'est le Rotillon. Des lieux de rencontre et puis j'aime beaucoup ces vieilles, ces anciennes maisons-là. Les balcons autour sur les toits, ça j'aime, je trouve ça très beau. En même temps en étant là, en voyant ça, j'entends le bruit de la ville.” - Monika, 62, périurbain

It is important to understand that Bachelard's phenomenological method is neither inductive nor deductive and furthermore, it is important to distinguish phenomenological aesthetics from philosophical aesthetics (aesthetics from “above”) and from empirical aesthetics (aesthetics from “below”). It is the aesthetics from “the inside” that “studies structures of conscious experience as experienced from the first-person point of view, along with relevant conditions of experience” (Smith, 2016). This kind of aesthetics enables researchers to study how human beings experience daily life by surpassing the actual material world, and how human beings transform the Euclidian three-dimensional space into a lived space made of memories, hopes, and expectations. Bachelard is often seen as a nostalgic writer who sometimes wrote uncritically about the spaces he himself loved. This is why “The Poetics of Space” should be understood primarily as a method: It helps researchers like myself to understand how the aesthetic space is constituted as a space of the subject, where “one does not feel anymore towards the world, but in the world” (see Cohn and Di Liberti 2012). In the following examples, one can see how the interviewees produced aesthetic space from a set of imagined relations:

“[Photo 14] Là, il y a un mélange de, j'imagine, d'habitations, de commerces. Purement esthétiquement, l'ancien et le moderne ça jure pas, c'est assez bien équilibré. Là, j'imaginerais des gens qui habitent peut-être depuis un certain temps, et qui connaissent d'autres personnes, enfin. J'imagine une certaine vie sociale. Donc peut-être avec un confort de vie plutôt positive.” - Walter, 60, village-periurbain (campagne)

“[Photo 16] J'aime beaucoup ce genre de bâtiments là, donc, je serais sensible à ce genre d'architecture là. Je trouve que c'est plutôt de beaux bâtiments, mais par leur ancienneté, par leur côté classique dans le sens (...) Ah, je pense que c'est un quartier chic de Genève avec les grosses voitures qu'il y a devant, non, et puis voilà, en général, ces quartiers-là sont plutôt avec de magnifiques appartements début du siècle, haut plafond, beau parquet et tout ça, moulures, donc ça m'évoque, ça m'évoque le chic de la bonne société.” - Laure, 30, ville (ville)

“[Photo 5] J'aime bien parce que ça raconte la ville dans ses mutations. J'ai l'impression qu'ici il y a des petites maisons encore qui paraissent complètement perdu dans cet ensemble, mais il y a une cohérence. Ça raconte une histoire. Ça

raconte une histoire d'une société qui a bougé, d'une réflexion urbanistique qui s'est vue confronté à, peut-être une augmentation de la population, et en même temps par une augmentation du territoire, donc il faut composer avec ça, et je trouve que c'est assez bien réussi.” - Anna, 60, village-périurbain (petite ville)

“Alors, moi j'aime bien la cour, là. Ça veut dire qu'il y a une vie de quartier. La terrasse aussi. On peut imaginer que les gens se connaissent, s'interpèlent, se rencontrent. Leur appartement il est sûrement fonctionnel, sans plus. Ça manque de verdure.” - Monika, 62, périurbain

The aesthetic space comes close to Edward Soja's influential concept of “thirdspace” in which everything comes together: “subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (Soja 1996, 56-57).

Aesthetic Space Depends on Both Actuality and Virtuality of Aesthetic Object

Researchers' understanding of the realm of the aesthetic does not derive from the study of various aesthetic objects (including art objects, objets trouvés, landscapes, faces, etc.) taken separately from the aesthetic experience of these objects, nor does it derive from the study of *a priori* aesthetic experience of aesthetic objects, which only later become the intentional targets of that particular experience or attitude. Instead, the aesthetic experience is a process of interaction between the individual and his/her environment, characterized by the production of a particular set of relations that are distinctively aesthetic. Aesthetic concepts, such as the beautiful or the sublime, emerge as a result of that interaction.

Aesthetic objects are not to be understood as devoid of meaning. Since the realm of the aesthetic activates the realm of the virtual, i.e., the realm of the possible, existing only in a latent state, each aesthetic object already holds the seeds of aesthetic experience.

“Je trouvais déjà l'appartement beau quand il était vide. Mais je savais presque, je pressentais que je le trouverais encore plus beau quand il serait habité et, donc pour moi, c'est déjà ça aussi. Enfin, je pense qu'il y a en tous cas une dimension aussi de la beauté, d'un espace habité, qui tient de ce qu'il nous donne à sentir aussi, sur les

gens qui l'habitent ou sur la manière dont ils habitent, sur le fait d'être habité. Finalement aussi quelque part, ce qu'il y a de vivant dedans." - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

While Dewey believed that any aesthetic ideal "absorbs into itself memories of the past and anticipations of the future" (2005, 17), in a similar way Sartre considered that imaginary objects act a sort of "mélange of past impressions and recent knowledge" (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 90). This fusion of the current and the imaginary, i.e., the actual and the virtual, was clearly expressed by the interviewees:

(...) C'est aussi possible qu'au contraire il y ait aussi une dimension plutôt un peu rassurante parce que c'est finalement aussi des éléments comme ça qu'on voit depuis toujours aussi et puis, qui nous sont très familiers aussi d'un autre côté. Il y a peut-être aussi ça, je ne sais pas. Et c'est du coup, c'est une explication presque contradictoire je trouve, entre ce qui permet de s'échapper et puis ce qui nous recentre plutôt sur du connu puis du familier quoi. Mais peut-être qu'il y a un peu des deux aussi. C'est aussi possible." - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

"Qu'est-ce qui est laid? Rien. Il n'y a rien qui me paraisse laid ici. Il y a même une petite route qui est un peu défoncée là-bas. Enfin, ce n'est pas une belle route toute droite, moi qui suis maniaque voilà, mais elle est défoncée par une racine d'un arbre, je trouve ça juste magnifique parce que ça me rappelle des vacances au sud de la France. Voilà, avec ces cèdres qui prennent, qui déforment le béton." - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

"C'est de la magie. Et il y a la piscine. Vous vous croyez au 19e siècle." - Maria, 59, ville (ville)

"Une maison de vacances dans laquelle on a passé toutes nos vacances étant enfant, ça ravive des souvenirs et l'endroit, on le trouvera peut-être beau simplement parce qu'on y a passé de bons moments." - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

"Je pense que c'est un peu la même idée. Ça va être quelque chose qui va avoir un effet répulsif. Après la laideur, c'est peut être plus liée à je ne sais pas, les expériences négatives. En fin, c'est peut-être pour ça qu'on va trouver des choses moins attractives. Quelque chose qui rappelle à un mauvais souvenir, peut-être on va trouver cela laid alors qu'on faite ça rappelle un mauvais souvenir." - Nina, 25, ville (petite ville)

Chantal describes well this fusion of the virtual and actual while visiting her old family house:

“On est retourné visiter la ferme il y’a vingt ans. Avec mes frères et sœurs, c’est fou, on a trouvé les pièces petites. Quand j’étais petite j’ai trouvé ça grand, et puis moi en fait ce qui me reste le plus maintenant ce sont les bruits. Les bruits des portes qui se fermaient. C’est des anciennes fermetures de portes. Alors c’est un bruit particulier que tu n’as plus avec les fermetures de portes actuelles. Tu avais aussi la targette pour fermer à clé. D’ailleurs l’autre jour j’étais, on était dans un café là, je ne sais pas dans quel village. Je vais aux toilettes, c’était encore ce vieux système de fermeture de porte, je me dis: Ah ! C’est le même bruit. Le bruit de différentes portes: de la cuisine, de la salle à manger. On avait un endroit, comme on avait pas de frigo, on a appelé ça la dépense, là où on dépose les aliments, le lait, parce qu’on a des vaches et tout ça, et là aussi c’est un bruit particulier et pour moi, c’est vrai que j’ai des images qui me reviennent plus qu’avant, je crois avec l’âge. Les images du passé reviennent plus. Donc je me fais mon petit cinéma des différents endroits, de la maison. Des fois, comme si je marche autour de la maison avec une petite caméra comme ça et je me remémore tout ce que voyais quand j’étais gamine quoi.” - Chantal, 65, périurbain (campagne)

In his seminal work “Critique of Judgment”, Kant famously isolated disinterested pleasure as a distinctively aesthetic attitude by which we take up a certain attitude toward objects, separating them from our practical concerns.³⁴ Since then, almost every philosopher or thinker who is interested in the aesthetic experience has discussed the concept of disinterestedness: Schopenhauer turned disinterestedness “into an affecting term, marking a sense of deliberation or release from the strivings of the will”; Bell characterized it as an emotion that corresponds to a “release from the everyday life”; and Beardsley, in a similar way, characterized it as a “felt freedom from the concerns of ordinary living” (see Carroll 2002, 146). One of our interviewees specifically pointed out this particular character of the aesthetic experience that liberates us from the weight of ethical decisions:

“Je pense que la vraie beauté, ce qu'elle évoque, ce qu'elle suscite chez moi, c'est une sorte d'émerveillement, ou d'étonnement. Et puis oui, assez souvent aussi, ça me fait sortir un peu de, je ne peux pas dire de moi-même, mais plutôt de ce monde très agité des fois, dans lequel on est, ou de cet espèce d'univers très agité dans lequel on est, où on pense toujours à ce qui va nous arriver dans le futur, en train de planifier.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

³⁴ If I follow the Kantian division between the aesthetic and the practical to its end, I find myself obliged to agree with Théophile Gautier who proclaimed that “Nothing is really beautiful unless it is useless; everything useful is ugly, for it expresses a need, and the needs of man are ignoble and disgusting, like his poor weak nature. The most useful place in a house is the lavatory” (Gautier 1900).

Seeing in an imaginative way (particularly when one is involved in deep aesthetic engagement) is presented to us as a story, as an imaginative walk — a promenade (Schaeffer 2015, 49) that brings us to the spatial and temporal character of aesthetic experience. For Jean-Marie Schaeffer, one of the major characteristics of the aesthetic experience is its attentional treatment, which is not restricted to any single particular task — it does not have any goal that would allow a target of attention to be defined before or during the visual exploration. As a consequence, the first symptom of an aesthetic experience is the phenomenon of “attentional saturation” (fr. *saturation attentionnelle*), which emerges when an indefinite number of characteristics become relevant. Schaeffer gives the following example: In the perceptive mode of a stock exchange diagram, only the relative positioning of a line in regard to cartesian coordinates matters, while in the aesthetic mode, an indefinite amount of information is potentially relevant. This characteristic leads Schaeffer to conclude that in the aesthetic mode, our capacity to treat different sources of information in a parallel way (that is, more or less simultaneously, rather than serially) is significantly higher than in the perceptive mode. He argues that in the aesthetic mode our attention is distributed rather than focalized, which is expressed in a receptivity that is generalized and undetermined (Schaeffer 2015, 51-62). Finally, he claims that aesthetic attention is characterized by an “openness”, in a sense that it welcomes everything that presents itself to it, without exclusivity and without hurrying to a conclusion. Anna puts it this way:

“Si j'achète un tableau, il faut que ce tableau me plaise. Et me plaire signifie pour moi qu'il m'interpelle, qu'il m'invite à m'arrêter. Ça veut dire qu'il porte des éléments qui me conduisent à méditer que je le trouve esthétiquement attirant, par sa composition, par le jeu chromatique des couleurs et par l'histoire qu'il me raconte et aussi par le travail de l'artiste, donc c'est plusieurs éléments, en fait, qui construisent chez moi le beau.” - Anna, 60, périurbain (petite ville)

When an individual looks at an aesthetic object that is presented to his/her perception, he/she also imagines it. This is due to our capacity as human beings to produce a single experience in two simultaneous ways that do not compete with each other. Richard Wollheim argues that images require an attentional “twofoldness”, i.e. a “simultaneous attention to what is seen and to the features of the medium” (Wollheim 1980, 212). Thus, images are neither fully transparent nor totally opaque:

“[Photo 15] Non, non, alors pas du tout. (...) Mais, non ce n'est pas beau, ce n'est pas une belle maison. C'est standard. Il y a rien d'original là-dedans. Et puis, je trouve ça très très laid. Et puis ça suggère quelque chose. Ça voudrait faire bourgeois et puis ça marque une certaine réussite sociale quand même. C'est cosu. Je dirais que ça pourrait être pour un agent de banque, vous voyez, qui a installé sa

famille. Ça sent un peu le côté, on est bien, on est en confort, on a réussi quelque chose dans notre vie, on va laisser quelque chose pour les enfants, on a le jardin. Puis, ça sent le côté cosu, mais ce n'est pas très osé disons.” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

Although the objects of our everyday experiences are replete with aesthetic character, it would be wrong to assume that we are always engaged in the aesthetic experience. The interviewees confirmed that one must take a certain attitude to be able to experience the world in an aesthetic way.

“C'est vrai que par exemple dans mes habitudes de consommation de biens matériels, comme ça, quand j'achète des choses, là franchement, je pense que je ne fais pas très attention à l'aspect esthétique. Je ne sais pas. Je sais qu'il y a des gens pour qui c'est important de quoi leur ordinateur à l'air. Ça c'est vraiment un truc que je ne regarde même pas.” - Urs, ville (campagne)

“Vous pouvez être dans un endroit absolument magnifique et être déprimé, vous ne trouverez rien de beau au fond.” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

The incapacity of engaging in an aesthetic experience is related to the incapacity of isolating an analogical representative of the real actual situation. In the aesthetic mode, an individual does not search to cognize, but rather to recognize.

Alors, je trouve qu'il y a pas d'âme, quelque part. Je ne sais pas, il y a rien. L'œil cherche mais il y a rien, auquel on peut s'accrocher, où on se dit « tiens, il y a ça, ça », là il y a quelqu'un qui a mis un peu d'imagination, un peu d'âme, qui est un peu sorti du fonctionnel. - Peter, 63, ville (ville)

“[Photo 12] L'image en soi, elle n'a rien de particulier, ce n'est pas quelque chose qui m'attire, enfin, je ne trouve pas ça très intéressant parce que c'est qu'un lieu d'habitation. Les maisons elles ont rien de particulier, oui, y a quand même des couleurs un peu moches. Ça ne me repousse pas, ça ne m'attire pas, c'est une image qui m'est assez neutre. Bien qu'en soi les bâtiments ils ne me plaisent pas particulièrement. Si je passais devant, je pense que je ne regarderais pas, enfin je ne m'arrêtera pas pour regarder.” - Amir, 25, ville (ville)

Any aesthetic experience requires a sort of active participation from the observer, because it is one's imaginative attention that enables one to see a certain object in one way or another. Scruton argues that the “pleasure of aesthetic experience is inseparable from the act of attention to its object; (...) [it] is not so much an effect of its object, as a *mode of understanding it*” (1979, p.112). Researchers cannot therefore consider individuals as

mere passive agents, for both the production of aesthetic space and the emergence of aesthetic phenomena necessitate the engaged activity of individuals.

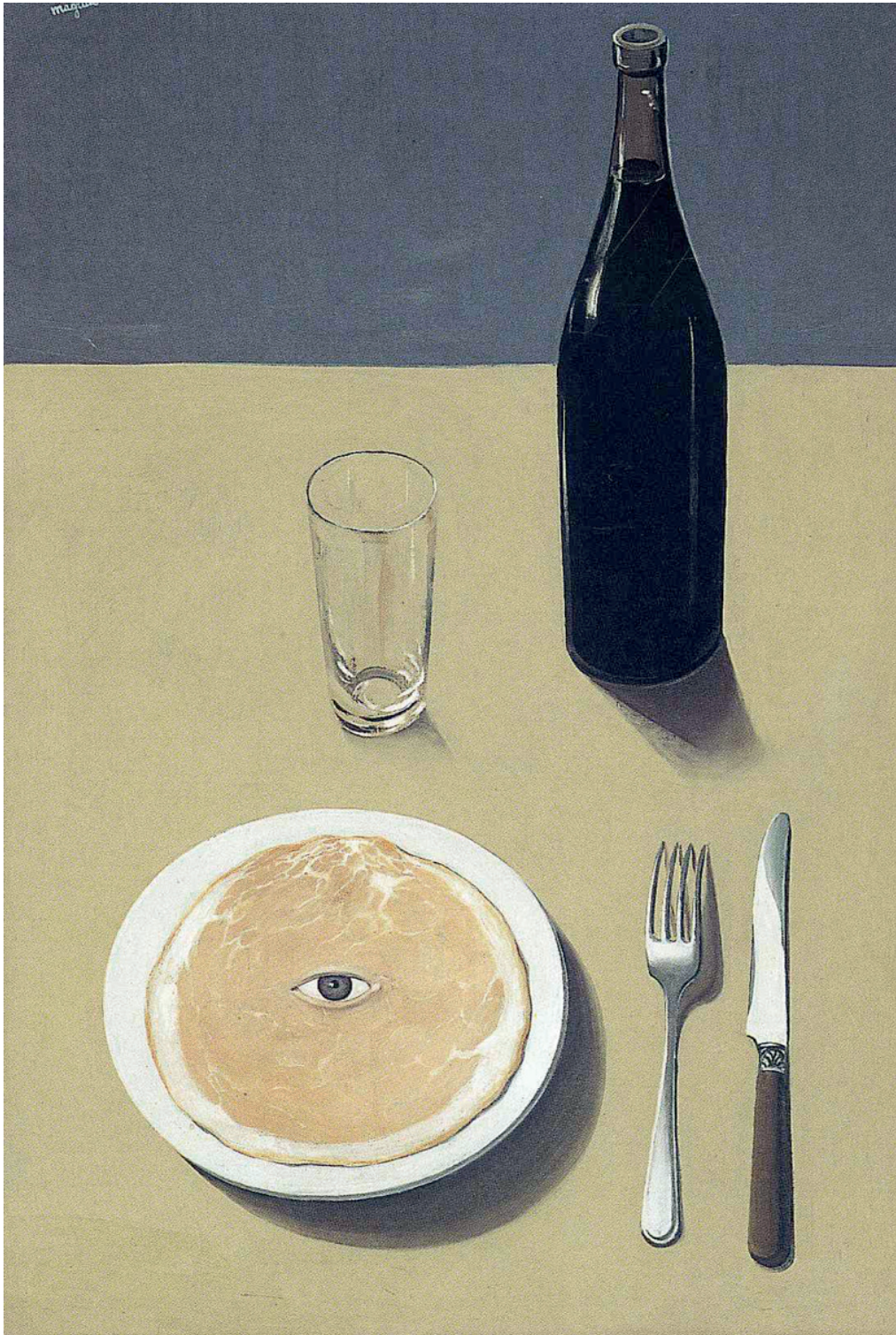


Fig. 19 - Le portrait, René Magritte, 1935 © 2017, ProLitteris, Zurich

The Medial Character of Aesthetic Object

It is worthwhile to repeat that my understanding of the aesthetic refers to a certain type of experience and not to a particular type of object. In this sense, I agree with the proposition of Schaeffer to consider an object as aesthetic only when its usage is aesthetic (Schaeffer 2015, 44), i.e., when an object plays the role of an analogon in the act of production of an aesthetic space. Now the question is: What is the importance of the aesthetic object in this imaginative process? In “The World as Will and Idea”, Schopenhauer speaks of how an individual engaged in an aesthetic experience gives himself or herself completely to the object of aesthetic contemplation. According to him, this object has the capacity to fill, in a certain way, an individual’s entire consciousness:

“[He] lets his whole consciousness be filled with the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether a landscape, a tree, a mountain, a building, or whatever it may be; inasmuch as he loses himself in this object (to use a pregnant German idiom), i.e., forgets even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, so that it is as if the object alone were there, without any one to perceive it, and he can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception, but both have become one, because the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture” (Schopenhauer 1957 [1883]).

For Sartre, there is a strong distinction between the physical thing that belongs to the realm of the real and an image that is unreal, i.e., absent or non-existent. According to him, when an individual looks at a photograph of a friend, he/she is conscious of the friend who is not there, thanks to the actual photograph that is presented to our perception. The photography in question presents itself as analogous to that friend. It becomes fully transparent, a sort of second thing (fr. *trompe-l’oeil*) who’s sole purpose is to provide an access to the unreal. This rather extreme position of Sartre comes as no surprise. His existential philosophy is based on a premise that human existence unfolds itself only through action. Since Sartre considered humans as living only in the realm of the real (which he equated with the actual), he rejected the old Aristotelian doctrine of potential and actual reality. His philosophy is based on a study of concrete human beings acting in actual situations (he therefore rejected any possibility of a general definition of human beings). Since researchers can only study a person through his or her real actualized actions, there can be no partway between the real and unreal. He considered

beauty as “a value that can only ever be applied to the imaginary”, leading him to conclude that “the real is never beautiful” (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 193). Consequently, this position opens up an abyss between ethics and aesthetics, leaving no possibility of understanding how one could possibly influence other.

Merleau-Ponty, who spent much of his career criticizing and reformulating many of Sartre's dualist positions, argued that humans also live in the imaginary, meaning that the imaginary cannot be completely excluded from the real. Although he did not live long enough to develop a philosophy of the imaginary solid enough to stand on its own, he made a substantial contribution to our understanding of the image, which he described as appearing simultaneously quasi-present and imminently visible. According to Merleau-Ponty, “the image is somehow both present and absent, real and unreal, and visible and invisible at the same time” in a way that “presence and absence, reality and unreality, and visibility and invisibility inherently participate with or are implied in one another” (Perri 2013). In his unfinished work “The Visible and the Invisible”, he argues that “the invisible is not the contradictory of the visible: the visible itself has an inner framework [membrure], and the in-visible is the secret counterpart of the visible, it appears only within it.” (1968, 215)

Aiming to capture this ambiguous nature of the image, Merleau-Ponty argued that “the image has a quasi-presence and partakes in a degree of reality” (Perri 2013). While distinguishing an image from a mere sign, he expressed his position in a lecture that he gave on French national radio in 1948:

“Is the painting not comparable to the arrows in stations that have no other function than to point us towards the exit or the platform? [...] If this were the case, then the goal of the painting would be to be a trompe-l'oeil and the meaning [signification] of the painting would be entirely beyond the canvas in the objects it signifies, in its subject. Yet, it is precisely against this conception that all valuable painting has come into being.” (cited in Perri 2013)

According to Merleau-Ponty, Sartre does not pay sufficient attention to the specificity and existence of the objects that make the material support of the image. As Perri argues, “Merleau-Ponty aims to formulate a new definition of images that, on the one hand, does justice to its quasi-present and quasi-real character without reducing it to a thing and that, on the other hand, does justice to its quasi-absent and quasi-irreal character without reducing it to a nothing” (Perri 2013). In order to give proper emphasis to the

actual object an individual can perceive with his/her senses, I will consider that individuals imagine according to aesthetic objects rather than despite them.

In the famous passage of “The Book of Tea”, Kakuto Okakura describes a simple situation in the Japanese tea ceremony that is highly aesthetic precisely because what is perceived and sensed constantly conjures up what is imagined and absent. It is precisely because the participants of the ceremony focus on the here and now that they are able to detach from the actual world and enter the imaginary:

“(…) quiet reigns with nothing to break the silence save the note of the boiling water in the iron kettle. The kettle sings well, for pieces of iron are so arranged in the bottom as to produce a peculiar melody in which one may hear the echoes of a cataract muffled by clouds, of a distant sea breaking among the rocks, a rainstorm sweeping through a bamboo forest, or of the sighing of pines on some faraway hill.”

The aesthetic object is not simply a neutral analogical representative of the imaginary object that constitutes spaces of human imagination. “[A]n image does not emerge despite its material support, but thanks to it” (Alloa 2011, 186). “Rather than seeing it, [we] see according to or with it” (Merleau-Ponty, cited in Alloa 2011). This seeing-with, as Alloa recently argued, means that we as researchers have to take into account our resistance to the total transparency of the image asserted by the philosophy of Sartre. “It is because we cannot eliminate the picture’s materiality that we have to see it along its own lines” (2011, 188). He then reminds us that Husserl, “who spends much effort describing processes of seeing-in, which he also calls ‘perceptive imagination’ (perzeptive Imagination), has to admit that we cannot have the appearing image object without the medial support which, rather than being a purely neutral projective surface, sometimes ‘excites’ (erregt) an image which the spectator hadn’t imagined himself beforehand” (2011, 188).

“Voilà un lieu où j'aimerais vivre ! De la vigne, de la verdure, des champs. Oui, une belle ferme. Oui c'est le genre d'endroit que j'aime beaucoup. Puis la transition de couleurs, le bleu, le vert, des endroits calmes. Il y a de l'espace, il y a de l'espace, de la verdure, ça, ça me plaît. (...) Moi j'imagine une grande famille qui vit ici, les grands-parents, les enfants, les petits-enfants. Oui, je vois une belle vie familiale, enfin voilà.” - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

“Forcément, une maison comme ça, (...), c'est quelque chose de génial. Une maison comme ça, vous imaginez tout de suite avoir une grande famille, un super

jardin. Mais en même temps, ça signifie ne pas vivre en ville, donc, voilà.” - Sabrina, 35, ville (ville)

“Alors là, je pense que, ben c'est typique un quartier de villas de la région. C'est assez joli, il n'y a pas de bâtiment qui fait tache à côté des autres. On voit que celui-ci est beaucoup plus moderne, mais il a respecté aussi. Voilà, c'est aussi un toit, c'est pas forcément un toit plat, ils ont respecté là, ils ont refait aussi, ils ont aussi respecté le toit. Je pense qu'ils pouvaient pas non plus faire ce qu'ils voulaient, j'imagine, mais c'est assez harmonieux, ça a l'air très tranquille. J'aime bien, j'aime bien. Pourquoi ? Je me verrai peut être vivre là, oui.” - Daniela, 43, périurbain (banlieue)

Societal objects are pregnant with the aesthetic, and each inhabitant, as Laurent Matthey writes, is a poet in a practical manner (“poète à l'état pratique”) (Matthey 2008). The following examples further illustrate the medial, rather than projective, character of aesthetic objects:

“Il y a un film de Disney qui raconte l'histoire d'un homme qui habite une toute petite maison, qui est devenu veuf. C'est à New York et puis on lui demande de partir de là parce qu'il faut construire une maison et lui il s'arrange pour construire toute une structure de ballons gonflables en dessous de sa maison et puis un jour il lâche les ballons et la maison se soulève comme ça. Et puis il s'en va se poser ailleurs. Je ne sais pas si c'est un film de studio Pixar. Je ne sais pas si vous l'avez vu, mais j'ai l'impression que c'est la maison du vieux monsieur qui ne lâchera pas devant un promoteur des mobiliers et quand il sera obligé il ne permettra pas que sa maison soit rasée. Mais ça, c'est juste une petite fantaisie en voyant cette image.” - Anna, 60, village-périurbain (petite ville)

“Alors on ne voit que les balcons donc, on ne voit pas qu'il y a des êtres humains là-dedans. C'est fermé, on ne voit pas leurs fenêtres, on ne voit que les balcons. Comme ça eux ils sont tranquilles, d'accord, puis ils ont leur vue puis ça les abrite du bruit, ça doit être l'idéal, mais si vous me posez la question de regarder ça depuis là, et bien je trouve ces espèces de trucs, ces balcons, moches. Ça, c'est vraiment comme si les gens voulaient se cacher et c'est chacun pour soi.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

“- Ben voilà, ça, c'est un bâtiment relativement ancien, ça doit être beau, enfin ça doit me plaire à l'intérieur, ça doit avoir un certain charme.

- Donc c'est plutôt l'intérieur que vous voyez en regardant l'extérieur ?

- Ah bah oui ! (rire) Je l'imagine, oui. C'est vrai.” - Monika, 62, périurbain.

“[Photo 15] Jolie maison. Bon ça, ça me rappelle un peu les lieux où on vit nous. Voilà. Un beau palmier, moi ça j'adore. Ça, ça me rappelle les vacances. Encore les souvenirs.” - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

Georges Didi-Huberman, French philosopher and art historian, has been continually stressing the active role of aesthetic objects (he is primarily focused on the objects of art) in the way we see those objects. In the work which explores American minimalist sculpture of the sixties and seventies entitled “Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde” (1992), he speaks of “the unavoidable scission of seeing”, meaning that the act of seeing is not simply a one way road. The objects that we see, turn back looking at us. According to Didi-Huberman, this “paradox of vision” is something that we cannot fight - the act of seeing unfolds in the “space-between”.

It is with (aesthetic) objects that images can be produced, and this, in turn, “enable[s] us to see what remains otherwise inaccessible, latent or unseen” (Alloa 2011, 186). Each aesthetic ideal is both an object of aesthetic interest and a technique for experiencing the world in a particular imaginative manner. It is important to underline that since the interviewees were presented with a photograph of an urban scene, and did not directly experience it, their perceptions were mediated not only by the urban scene in question but by the photograph as well. In this sense, one might speak of a double transparency of the photograph. Amir expresses this clearly:

“[Photo 15] Autant l'image qui ne me plait pas, autant je la trouve ennuyeuse en soi, autant je m'ennuie à m'imaginer habiter ici. Les deux.”

Each aesthetic object “excites” us to produce a certain image (a certain relation) that is already (virtually) present in the object itself. However, precisely which virtuality will be activated depends on the observer’s imaginative capacities:

“- Vous pensez qu'un HLM de 20 étages n'est pas vivant ?
- Ce n'est pas ça, c'est l'image qu'il reflète qui n'est pas vivante pour moi, qui est moins vivante. Parce que justement c'est tellement grand, que même, vous avez des petits balcons, des trucs comme ça, y a des gens ils mettent des plantes des trucs comme ça, tout de suite ça donne autre chose. (...) Pour moi, ça, pour moi ce n'est pas vivant. C'est un immeuble posé là et puis, bien sûr que ça a une âme, y a des gens qui habitent, y a des choses, mais pour moi c'est plus impersonnel, que pour moi ça, ça reflète déjà plus un vécu, une vie, quelque chose.” - Sara, 48, ville (campagne)

“Si on montre la photo comme ça, justement je dirais que les trois tours elles font, elles détonnent avec le reste, elles font un peu tache. Mais, ensuite si je me mets

moi dans la perspective d'un résident potentiel, je me dis que si j'ai un appartement en haut, ça doit être pas mal quoi. On retrouve un peu l'idée, comme je disais au début, dans les autres questions, que c'est différent si tu, si tu vois un quartier ou des photos de l'extérieur ou de la perspective de celui qui habite." - Lucas, 29, ville (ville)

What further distinguishes Merleau-Ponty's philosophy from the philosophy of Sartre, is his insistence on the body as the medium of consciousness. In "Phenomenology of Perception", he argues that even simple sensations, like the sensation of a uniform patch of color, are never separated from the other senses or from the situation or movement of one's own body. Based on Goldstein's experiments on the effect of color stimuli on muscle tension, he concludes that even the perception of red or green colors involve different bodily behaviours and movements. Human beings have a body that is a changing and moving environment itself, and it interacts with other natural or artificial environments. This interaction with other environments, in turn, defines the limits of our capacities. Therefore, it is because of our body that we as humans are conscious of various human and non-human actions, whether these actions are in the realm of the actual or the virtual. If our body is the reason that we can participate in the perpetual process of the production of space, then a body must (re)appear in a pivotal position within a theory whose aim is to understand and explain the nature of the aesthetic experience. However, a body is not to be understood as a mere sensorial apparatus upon which the outside world is imprinted like a photograph, but as a movement that produces meanings. The knowing subject and the world appear at one and the same time, as the French word *connaissance* would unintentionally suggest (see Bullington 2013, 23-24). It is precisely in this moment, when a particular relation between a subject and an object is built, that beauty itself emerges.

"Je pense que c'est quelque chose qui est à la fois donné mais que la plupart on est aussi en train de découvrir tout au long de notre vie et puis je pense que c'est quelque chose qui vient à notre rencontre et puis ou on va à la rencontre de ça aussi." - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

What the Heidegger's concept of "being-in-the-world" and Merleau-Ponty's understanding of "ex-istence" teach us is that humans are not the only source of meaning. As Hubert T. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus write in their introduction to the 1964 English collection of Merleau-Ponty's texts, "meanings are not given to experience but received from it" (Merleau-Ponty 1964 p.xi). Meanings are never ready-made. They therefore stress the importance of human experience from within the world which always appears fundamental to any meaningful production of space, including the aesthetic space.

Emergence of Beauty and Aesthetic Emotions

Beauty has intrigued humanity for several thousand years at least, and it is one of the oldest philosophical problems. Indeed, according to Hesiod, at the marriage of Cadmus and Harmony in Thebes, the Muses sang the following refrain: “Only that which is beautiful is loved; That which is not beautiful is not loved.” (Eco 2010, 37) As Plato demonstrated in *Hippias*, it is a paradoxical, elusive and complex notion. There are many fundamental questions involved with the notion, but before I tackle some of these, I must first ask if beauty is still a relevant topic today, since some scholars seem to find no problem in dismissing the concept of beauty as something that belongs to the eighteenth century debate. I argue that the concept of beauty, along with other aesthetic concepts, is as important now as it was in the time of Hesiod, simply because beauty has never ceased to be a constitutive element of human existence. Barbara puts it this way:

“C’est primordial. La beauté fait partie de la qualité de vie. Mais ça peut être de la beauté toute simple, des fleurs qu’on met devant chez soi, voilà, mais c’est primordial. Il y a un lien avec le sens de la vie, avec le spirituel, eh bien oui, la beauté c’est essentiel.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

Ruth Lorand observes that recently the concept of beauty has somehow fallen out of the fashion (Lorand 2007). This may be due the fact that contemporary professional discourse has limited the concept of beauty to beautiful things, and colors and sounds only. If researchers pay close attention to what ordinary people have to say, we can learn that everyday discourses are closer to the Greek concept of beauty, which was extended, as Tatarkiewicz argues (1972), to “beautiful thought and customs” as well. It seems like the ideas, social conducts, or even the “solutions to all kinds of problems are often described as beautiful” (Lorand 2007), and the interviewees clearly confirm this finding:

“- Pour moi, alors si on parle de personnes, je pourrais me dire que c’est une personne laide à premier abord. Mais, alors à ce niveau-là, ce n’est pas la laideur pour moi. Après, c’est la beauté intérieure qui me touchera le plus. Donc j’arrive à dépasser peut-être ce qu’au premier abord j’aurais dit laideur. Mais pour moi un être humain, il n’est pas absolument laid. Il est... la valeur intérieure a une grande valeur.

- Donc (...) il y a la beauté intérieure et la beauté extérieure ?

- Ah ! Ça de toute façon.

- Et qu’est-ce que ça veut dire la beauté intérieure ?

- C’est la grandeur du cœur. C’est l’approche de la vie. C’est l’approche aux personnes. C’est la flamme de vie.” - Martha, 65, ville (campagne)

“Je pense, la verdure, c'est un élément beau qui est important, oui. Aussi, le fait qu'il y ait peu de trafic. Pour moi ça renforce. L'architecture est pas mal aussi. C'est vrai quand il n'y a pas d'immeubles trop élevés, je pense maximum 5 étages, peut-être... Quand il y a pas mal de familles aussi et c'est vrai que quand il y a des enfants qui traversent le quartier et qui jouent, ça c'est un élément qui me semble beau aussi. Ça apporte de la vie, disons. Je pense que c'est à peu près ces éléments-là.” - Martin, 22, ville (ville)

Beauty emerges from social figurations (the word figuration, in the sense of Elias,³⁵ is taken to be a network of interdependencies). Beauty is not determined by any general law, nor can it be reduced to the sum of the aesthetic values that belong to various parts of the aesthetic object. It is possible to say that at each level, at each scale, a different kind of beauty can emerge. A collection of beautiful houses does not necessarily make a beautiful residential area. Martin and Thomas state this clearly:

“Il y a peut-être des meubles qui sont beaux en soi, mais en les combinant, ça ne va pas donner quelque chose de beau.” - Martin, 22, ville

“Si tu prends une maison hors du contexte, je la trouve beaucoup moins jolie. C'est surtout le contexte. Le village semble surtout plus joli qu'une seule maison.” - Thomas, 25, ville (campagne)

This is true for an urban environment as it is true for poetry. The beauty of a poem does not emerge from the beauty of the plot or characters within it. Rather, beauty emerges from the relation between the subject experiencing beauty, and the actuality and virtuality of a given aesthetic object. It is the space that makes beauty emerge. Since it integrates sensual (material) and conceptual (ideal) elements, an aesthetic space allows us to derive new meanings, “new interpretations” (Lorand 2007), of the elements that constitute it.³⁶ In this sense, that we might speak of aesthetic learning through which we expand the realm of possible. Beauty is a subjective expansion of the virtuality of aesthetic object.

Like the concept of space, the concept of beauty is always adjectival. Beauty is always the beauty of something. One can speak of picturesque beauty precisely because there is a picturesque space, or mathematical beauty because there is mathematical space. In this work, I primarily focused on the urban space, and therefore my aim was to shed some

³⁵ See the section “Studying Subjectivity: A Spatial and Historical Analysis of Aesthetic Judgment.”

³⁶ It seems that a similar position is offered by Lorand in her work “Aesthetic Order: A Philosophy of Order, Beauty and Art” (2002).

light on the beauty (or ugliness) of inhabited environments. Although many individuals may share similar aesthetic sensibilities, this does not mean that there could ever be a beauty, as a property of an object, which is independent of the observer. Urs states this quite clearly:

“Ce n'est pas parce qu'il y a une sorte de consensus que c'est objectif. Je pense que la beauté, pour moi, comme moi je la conçois, ça peut être que quelque chose de foncièrement subjectif, parce que c'est quelque chose de foncièrement relationnel en fait. Donc, il y a forcément un sujet au bout de cette relation. Ce n'est pas... Pour moi une beauté objective, ça n'a aucun sens. Cette espèce de... même si tout le monde serait d'accord, ça ne changera rien pour moi.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

It is equally important to understand that beauty is never given as an absolute value. Beauty is often only a seed waiting to be taken in and expanded by a person's imaginative consciousness. Sometimes, someone says: “Look what a beautiful building!”, and they move on, without actually getting deeply engaged in aesthetic experience. At other times, beauty can strike to the point where one totally surrenders to the aesthetic object. In this particular moment, the aesthetic object has the capacity of inhabiting a person's entire consciousness, precisely as Schopenhauer described it. This happens in moments of deep, or “thick” aesthetic experience, which is always accompanied by strong aesthetic emotions.

“Je suis partie une année aux États-Unis, puis j'étais dans le Nebraska où tout est plat. Et quand je suis rentrée chez moi, j'habitais près de Nyon et que j'ai vu cela, c'est là que j'ai pleuré, parce que tellement que j'ai trouvé beau.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

“J'aime toujours aller au pied du Jura parce que je suis née là-bas, dans ce côté-là. Et puis j'aime la vue depuis le pied du Jura contre ici, et sur le lac et les Alpes comme ça. C'est vrai que chez moi, ça crée une émotion. Donc c'est vrai que je pense que la beauté d'un paysage peut effectivement être augmentée, enfin, on peut la percevoir plus fortement quand on a un lien affectif, positif avec ce lieu-là. C'est vrai qu'il y a des endroits où, je ne sais pas, quand on a été en Chine où c'était beau, mais pour moi, ça me donne pas la même émotion qu'en regardant quelque chose ici, qui est peut être presque insignifiant, enfin qui est un paysage d'ici, mais moi je le trouve presque beau ou quoi, parce que je suis attachée justement. Je n'aurai pas pensé tiens, avant que tu me poses la question. Mais en réfléchissant, oui c'est vrai.” - Chantal, 65, périurbain (campagne)

“Je pense que ce qui est beau, c'est au moment où ça provoque un sentiment chez la personne qui regarde, peu importe, ce que c'est.” - Daniela, 43, périurbain (banlieue)

“Ce n'est pas un endroit qui est beau, mais c'est plus le sentiment que j'ai par rapport à cet espace qui va rendre cet endroit beau.” - Nina, 25, ville (campagne)

“- Qu'est-ce que la beauté pour vous ?

- C'est un sentiment. Bon, c'est lié à l'esthétique. Pour moi c'est lié à un sentiment esthétique. C'est difficile à exprimer.” - David, 65, périurbain (ville)

“Quand vous êtes dans un endroit où vous avez l'impression que c'est un endroit beau, c'est que vous êtes en paix, je crois.” - Peter, 63, ville (ville)

“Je trouve que les gens deviennent beaux quand on les aime.” - Maria, 59, ville (ville).

The aesthetic dimension thus plays a fundamental role in the well-being of inhabitants:

“[La beauté] change complètement l'humeur dans laquelle on est. La vision même de la journée si on est entourée de choses qui sont de notre choix esthétique. (...) Ça fait partie du bien-être. (...) On peut se sentir mal, jusqu'à être agressé, au maximum.” - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

“- Est-ce que vous pensez que notre expérience d'un lieu de résidence change par rapport à si on le trouve beau ou laid ?

- Ah, je pense que oui.

- Et de quelle manière dans ce cas-là ?

- Et bah ! Déjà dans une tranquillité d'un lever au matin, dans un apaisement comme un habitat. Pour moi, c'est un endroit très privé. Là où on est en contact avec soi-même le plus. Et je pense que si on se lève le matin, et qu'on se dit : « oh ! quel horrible trou ! », ou bien « quel horrible bâtiment ! », c'est une agression dès le matin. Tandis que, si vous avez un endroit où vous vous sentez bien et extérieurement bien, vous commencez bien votre journée.” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

“[La beauté] change complètement l'humeur dans laquelle on est. La vision même de la journée si on est entouré de choses qui sont, de notre choix, esthétique. (...) Ça fait partie du bien-être. (...) On peut se sentir mal, jusqu'à être agressé, au maximum.” - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

“Je pense que si on se lève le matin, et qu'on se dit : « Oh ! Quel horrible trou ! », ou bien « Quel horrible bâtiment ! », c'est une agression dès le matin. Tandis que,

si vous avez un endroit où vous vous sentez bien et extérieurement bien, vous commencez bien votre journée.” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

“- J’ai habité dans un immeuble très très moche. Ça me déprimait. Bon, c’est compliqué parce que le studio était aussi extrêmement moche, mais ça me déprimait de rentrer chez moi, je n’avais pas envie de rester chez moi. Le weekend, je sortais beaucoup plus où j’essayais d’aller ailleurs, tandis que maintenant, j’ai un appartement que je trouve beau, j’aime ce que je vois quand j’ouvre et je suis plus chez moi, je suis contente de rentrer chez moi. Ça me rend plus ... j’ai plus le sentiment de cocon, de que c’est chez moi en fait. J’accepte mieux que là c’est chez moi, alors que dans un immeuble moche, j’ai plus de peine à m’y sentir bien.” - Sabrina, 35, ville (ville)

Beauty emerges from relations, which in turn, can be boiled down to actions. Indeed, like space, beauty is produced with movement. Whenever someone engages in an aesthetic experience, beauty always emerges from a movement, whether it is a virtual or actual movement. Even when someone quietly contemplates a landscape, they are always actively involved, projecting themselves outwards, not passively accepting whatever comes to their senses. As a matter of fact, it isn’t possible to do otherwise. It is the human condition. Jean-Marie Guyau argued that architecture is an art of introducing mouvement in the inert things; to built, is to animate (1906). People always find signs of life to be aesthetic, for life is a promise of movement, of actions:

“Alors, moi j’aime bien la cour, là. Ça veut dire qu’il y a une vie de quartier. La terrasse aussi. On peut imaginer que les gens se connaissent, s’interpellent, se rencontrent.” - Monika, 62, périurbain

“On sait bien qu’un tableau n’est jamais la saisie de la réalité, mais une construction de la réalité et en même temps dans la manière de faire cette construction de la réalité il y a une lumière, il y a des ombres, il y a un équilibre de ces différents éléments qui donne quelque chose de vivant et qui vient toucher émotionnellement.” - Walter, 60, village-périurbain (campagne)

“[Photo 9] Ça c’est aussi une architecture que, moi, je trouve assez peu humaine en fait, pour moi, une fois de plus. (...) Bien, je pense que c’est aussi ça, en partie dans ce type d’immeuble qui suscite des associations négatives, je pense que c’est le côté aussi très, ou c’est très standardisé comme ça, chacun vit dans un environnement qui est un peu le même. Et puis là en fait moi ce qui, quelque part, ce qui me touche par exemple dans ce genre de trucs là, c’est de voir qu’on a quand même essayé de mettre des arbres et puis une place de jeux. C’est un peu ce genre de trucs là, finalement. (...) Mais je pense que finalement c’est un peu les seuls, surtout

dans quelque chose comme ça, qui est un peu, c'est un peu le désert de béton. On cherche finalement un peu les traces de vie, quoi.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

“- [Photo 2] Ce n'est pas un endroit qui m'intéresse, ce n'est pas où j'aimerais habiter.

- Pourquoi ?

- Parce que ça, je me rends compte que ce n'est pas un village. C'est un endroit, c'est simplement des maisons, on est là, il y a un petit peu de tout, il y a des anciennes. Il y a des toutes nouvelles. Pour moi, il y a pas de vie. Il y a de la verdure. Eux, ils ont le dégagé. Mais il y a pas de vie.

- Ce que vous entendez par « vie »?

- Là, je pourrais m'imaginer que c'est chacun pour soi quoi.” - Martha, 65, ville (campagne)

“Le paysage en terrasse c'est, pour moi, c'est aussi un peu quelque chose comme ça, c'est-à-dire où on a... oui, c'est une espèce d'efforts comme ça de l'être humain pour s'approprier la nature que je trouve... en tous cas, ça me touche. Oui, un peu dans tous les paysages d'ailleurs, pas que dans les vignes quoi. (...) Même un chantier, pour moi, c'est quelque chose qui est aussi un signe de vie.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

“- « Voir le lac », cela veut dire quoi en fait ?

- Ah ! Pour moi c'est une source de vie. C'est vraiment lié à la base de la vie. Oui c'est l'espèce de liberté qu'on voit dedans, je crois. Tandis que quand on a quelque chose devant, on se sent plus fermé. Oui c'est vraiment l'espace, quoi. C'est pour ça que je dis, même un espace de verdure me fait le même effet. Ce côté libre qu'on a plus vraiment, et par le travail, et par la vie qu'on a maintenant, quoi. On est toujours avec des horaires. On est obligés de faire un tas de choses.” - Emilia, 57, ville (bord de ville)

One could say that aesthetic qualities are not to be taken as properties of the environment *per se*, nor merely as the properties of a person reacting to the environment. The same action can be perceived as ugly or beautiful, depending on the perceiver's entire outlook on the world. Inhabitants always see their (immediate) environment in relation to themselves, as an objective part of their style of spatiality, in which their humanity may be either rebutted or confirmed. Beauty is objective insofar as the relations that make it emerge are objective. Beauty is also subjective, because at the core of each aesthetic relation there is an imaginative subject offering his individuality to the world. Hence, I argue that aesthetic properties are properties that emerge from the interaction (relation) between individuals and their environments, in a process in which they constitute themselves as subjects, and in which each individual has an idea of what society should be like and what it should look like.

The Aesthetic Dimension as a Component of Spatiality

Aesthetics is a matter of both a projective subject and a lived body. The body has a fundamental role in creating meaning in the world for human beings. In this sense, a systematic study of the aesthetic dimension cannot ignore the body, since it structures people's situations and experiences within the world. With his concept "flesh of the world", Merleau-Ponty "meant to describe the event where perception and meaning are born, not as a relationship between a constituting subject and a constituting object (traditional phenomenology), but as an intertwining or ensemble of being" (Bullington 2013, 23). He intended to loosen up the classical subject-object dichotomy and investigate a foggy area between the subject and object in which embodied human beings experience the world. He puts it this way:

"The sensible gives back to me what I lent to it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place. As I contemplate the blue of the sky I am not *set over against* it as an acosmic subject; I do not possess it in thought, or spread out towards it some idea of blue such as might reveal the secret of it, I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery, it 'thinks itself within me', I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified, and as it begins to exist for itself; my consciousness is saturated with this limitless blue. But, it may be retorted, the sky is not mind and there is surely no sense in saying that it exists for itself." (Merleau-Ponty 1962)

The world that objectively strikes a person's senses needs therefore to be subjectively interpreted by a sensing subject. As in the famous example of the Gestalt psychology, a person cannot simultaneously see the vase and the two faces. They appear one at a time, meaning that the emergence of one or the other meaning depends on the subjectivity of a perceiver. At the same time, the drawing, which is on paper and carries both meanings simultaneously, "invites" the subject to see both the vase and the two faces. It offers itself to the perceiver's subjectivity.

As researchers, "if we disregard the subject-object dichotomy and focus upon the realm of the 'in-between', we will discover a lived unity that we could call a mind-body unity always present to the world, in one way or another. The 'world', again, should be understood as the dialogue between the embodied human being and the presentation of something which beckons to us as an invitation to understand." (Bullington 2013, 25) This unity of the mind and body is what Merleau-Ponty calls "the lived body", which is

both material and self-conscious. Since we are projective beings, our lived body is always oriented outside itself towards the world and engaged in a constant dialogue with the otherness that makes the world. As J. Bullington reminds us, “this intertwined mind–body-presence is always embedded in a concrete situation. There is no world (as perceived) without a human to experience it, and there is no human experience that is not of the world. Thus, we cannot discuss the body as if it were something cut off from both mind and world.” (Bullington 2013, 25)

Objects do not simply act on our body to produce sensations, and our consciousness does not simply flash a light on the objects of the external world. If we are to bypass the Cartesian mind-body dualism, the realm of subjectivity has to be expanded to something more than just a (floating) human consciousness. Merleau-Ponty approached the problem of intentionality by postulating that the human body is always actively engaged in the constitution of meaning. He argued that every real or imaginary situation must be anticipated in the movements of the body. In a working note published in “The Visible and the Invisible”, Merleau-Ponty writes: “The perceived world (like the painting) is the ensemble of my body’s routes.” (1968, 247). Whether someone is “looking at the actual Montagne Sainte Victoire or at one of Cézanne’s paintings of the same mountain, in both cases, what is seen, according to Merleau-Ponty, must be virtually prefigured or anticipated in the movements and possible actions of the living body. (...) Thus, the image is not simply an absence that is not observable for itself since it reflects the capabilities, movements, and anticipations of the body that make all perception possible.” (Perri 2013) It is a person’s “knowing” body that acts as a base upon which one can construct the other dimensions of existence, including the aesthetic dimension.

Each aesthetic quality of the world includes a specific attitude suggested by the body itself that acts as synchronizer of the perceiver and the perceived world. The world affords itself in all its virtuality at the same time as the embodied subject produces meanings according to its interests, beliefs and fears. The real thus offers an almost inexhaustible number of connections between the objects that constitute it, but the final act of synthesis must be accomplished by the subject itself. This is why George Simmel remarks that “something is continuously being born from us” (2007, 74). By analyzing the discourse of inhabitants, I came to the conclusion that the meanings they derived by engaging themselves in the aesthetic experience appear as virtualities from the point of view of human action. It is as if the participants projected themselves into a virtual space and formed their judgements by contemplating virtual relations that the actual space could support:

“Je fais toujours du skate et j'ai commencé le skate vers 14 ans, et puis le skate... disons que le terrain de jeu, c'est la rue, donc c'est un environnement qui doit être très minéral. (...) Et puis c'est sûr, quand on va faire du skate et qu'on voit des bâtiments qui se construisent, avec des surfaces de béton assez grandes, des éléments peut-être inclinés, où on sait qu'on peut faire des figures de skate dessus, et bien ça, je trouve ça beau. Parce que justement je vois tout un potentiel de figures, potentiel de jeu, finalement.” - Martin, 22, ville (ville)

“[Photo 2] Ça me plaît moins parce que j'ai l'impression que c'est un peu moins vivant. Et puis ce que j'aime bien sur l'autre [photo 1], qu'il y a quand même un peu, ce côté tout le monde habite plus ou moins au même endroit, qu'il y ait plus facilement de la vie qu'ici où tout le monde est un peu éparpillé. Sans que ça soit forcément isolé. Les maisons elles sont un peu trop, je ne sais pas, un peu trop chic je dirais. (...) Moi je m'imagine moi-même et je sens que ça ne me conviendrait pas.

- Tu t'es imaginé toi-même dedans et c'est comme ça que tu as fabriqué ton jugement ?

- Oui.” - Amir, 25, ville (ville)

“Vu comme ça, il faudrait se projeter dans l'autre sens justement. En fait, être à l'intérieur et voir le lac, c'est ça qui fait toute la différence.” - Emilia, 57, ville (bord de ville)

“[Photo 16] Cette longue allée tranquille, on sent que c'est calme et tout ça. Comme je vous dis, le seul truc c'est que j'aurais encore planté quelques arbres, dans le meilleur des mondes. (...) Moi je trouve que c'est harmonieux. Même là, on se projette dans cette rue, on a envie d'aller au bout de la rue pour voir, qu'est-ce qu'il y a à gauche, qu'est-ce qu'il y a à droite. Voilà.” - Sara, 48, ville (campagne)

“[Photo 6] C'est superbe ça. Bon, là ces maisons n'ont probablement aucune valeur architecturale. Elles sont assez quelconques, mais là on a envie d'aller y habiter. On se dit que ces gens ils s'installent dans leur jardin là. On imagine les moments de convivialité très sympathiques. Ils font sécher leur linge dehors au grand air. Ces maisons sont de dates très différentes les unes des autres. On imagine une vie familiale. Plusieurs générations. Ça donne envie.” - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

If aesthetics is a matter of producing lived space through a lived body, this lived body is not to be understood as a mere objective materiality. Rather we should think of it as a subjective mind-body presence that carries in itself a sort of pre-reflected “operative intentionality”, as Merleau-Ponty calls it. The body itself possesses knowledge that is a pre-condition for the capacity to meaningfully project oneself into the virtualities of

aesthetic space. When people project themselves, they do not reflect on their virtual body. They do not calculate how they would have to move their body through the virtual space. The knowledge of the virtual body is as immediate and intuitive as the knowledge of the actual material body inhabiting the actual material world.

“[Photo 2] C’est joli ça. Ça c’est beau. (...) C’est un endroit qui personnellement me ferait assez rêver. Si j’étais très riche, je me verrais bien dans cette maison, ou dans celle-là, cette vieille maison de maître.” - Sabrina, 35, ville (ville)

“[Photo 9] J’aurais quand même de la peine à dire que c’est beau cet endroit. Je ne sais pas si c’est le style des immeubles ou, peut-être le fait qu’il y ait de petites fenêtres aussi, là il n’y a pas trop de balcons, c’est peut-être le côté nord, je ne sais pas, pas trop de balcons non plus. J’ai l’impression que ce n’est pas des endroits où j’aimerais vraiment vivre. En tous cas les immeubles roses là. (...) Quand je les vois, j’ai l’impression que dedans ça ne doit pas être des appartements très jolis aussi. Parce que les fenêtres sont petites, il n’y a peut-être pas beaucoup de lumière. J’ai l’impression qu’il y a aussi beaucoup de petits appartements, peut-être aussi. Et puis, par contre peut-être la tour qui est plus haute, ça a l’air différent, je ne sais pas. Mais je ne dirais pas qu’elle est belle non plus. Ça c’est vrai que, en tous cas aussi, la terrasse qui est devant, si je devais, je ne sais pas moi, inviter des gens pour aller boire un verre, ou je ne sais pas, si je voulais séduire une fille, ou je ne sais pas, demander ma copine en mariage comme ça, j’irais pas sur cette terrasse parce que je trouve pas que c’est un environnement que je trouverais beau.” - Lucas, 29, ville (ville)

“Mais comment la photo [13] est prise, je pourrais me projeter, parce qu’on voit qu’il y a de l’espace entre les immeubles. On imagine qu’il y a quand même de la verdure un peu partout.” - Emilia, 57, ville (campagne)

“[T]he imaginary is not an absolute inobservable” (Merleau-Ponty and Lefort 1968) since an image “reflects the capabilities, movements, and anticipations of the body that make all perception possible. That is, when we look at images, understood in the Merleau-Pontian sense, we are not confronted with a ghostlike presence that intrinsically refers to something that is absent or nonexistent. Rather, when we look at images, we can learn to see the one true world in a new way.” (Perri 2013). This is why Merleau-Ponty was against Sartre’s theory that imagination is a consciousness that does not “teach” us anything new. On the contrary, an image can surprise or disappoint us. On several occasions, our participants were surprised by their own aesthetic judgements, and this made them shed a new light on the external world:

“- [Photo 2] Les immeubles sont magnifiques, les architectures sont belles. Je trouve ça, ça c’est du moderne. Ça n’ a pas beaucoup d’intérêt. C’est vrai qu’il y a vingt ans, ils prenaient du temps à construire les bâtiments. Ils mettaient de la matière. Puis ça durait longtemps. Mais bon, il y a toujours ce lac devant. Ça me touche moins que l’autre, l’autre a plus de chose naturelle, comme la vigne. Elle a été implantée par des gens, mais ça fait plus un côté sauvage que ça, qui est déjà canalisé par les constructions. Pourtant là c’est un bord, carrément, un bord de lac. Donc pour les balades c’est génial. Il n’y a pas de route. Donc, je pourrais vivre là. Mais étonnamment j’aime mieux l’autre.

- Et pourquoi vous dites « étonnamment » ?

- Parce que je me surprends de mon choix. Ça me surprend. Là il y a le côté très verdure, justement les choses que j’aime beaucoup. Mais, pour moi, il y a un côté... C’est justement mes deux faces qui sont en contradiction, c’est un côté où je me sentirais plus isolée, et pourtant j’ai cette face très isolée, mais j’ai aussi besoin du monde. Là, je me sentirais plus isolée. J’ai l’impression que j’aurais plus de peine à me faire des connaissances dans un lieu comme ça que dans un lieu comme celui d’avant. Alors que l’architecture est plus belle là.” - Anellisse, 57, ville (campagne)

“C’est rigolo, parce que c’est tout ce que je n’aime pas et puis en même temps l’image en elle-même n’est pas si déplaisante parce qu’on peut avoir l’imaginaire de boire un verre sur une terrasse, qui m’attire, je ne sais pas” - Christine, 40, périurbain (banlieue)

“[Photo 5] C’est Lausanne. C’est familier. En fin. C’est un peu ce que je vois, ce que je connais. Bon je ne sais pas. Est-ce que, par exemple, je me verrais y vivre ? Oui, mais c’est marron, car c’est la description de ce que je n’aime pas” - Nina, ville (campagne)

People can learn a lot about themselves by analyzing their aesthetic judgments. When someone claims that something is beautiful, it is as if they are saying “look this is me, this is how I see the world when I am not under the burden of everyday ethical decisions”. In moments of aesthetic engagement (which can last a few seconds or an entire hour), individuals give themselves up to the imaginative experience. The result of this experience might come as a surprise to them. It can even show them that they are slightly different from what they thought they were. The peculiar character of aesthetic space is that it allows an individual at the same time to express what they really are, and to be stranger in their own sensing body, strangers to their own words. This is why individuals’ aesthetic sensibilities should be a matter of a societal debate, contrary to the old latin saying that tastes should not be discussed (*de gustibus non est disputandum*). Personal subjectivity should be put forward, not suppressed: not in the sense of forcing it upon others, but in order to shed new light on what the world, and the inhabited space, can

mean to each one of us. Maybe it will reveal that we do not understand something, or that we based our judgment on contradictory premises, which in turn may lead us to rethink and reevaluate other judgments we might have. When someone is engaged in an aesthetic experience, they exhibit a particular kind of knowledge that is auto-reflexive and subject-centred. Aesthetic knowledge alters the sensibility of humankind by enlarging human awareness with new ways of understanding the world.

“- La laideur, elle est interpellante puisqu'elle fait prendre conscience de ce qui est plus beau encore. Et la laideur pour moi c'est agressant. (...) Dans un bâtiment, ça m'interpellerait plus, le côté laideur. Tandis que la beauté me prendra dans l'émotion, dans la vibration. Je ferais partie d'un tout beaucoup plus grand quand il y a la beauté. Quand il y a laideur, je suis en question.”

- Quand vous dites « je suis en question », qu'est-ce que ça veut dire ?

- Sur deux plans probablement, en me disant : « mais pourquoi moi je trouve ça tellement affreux ? Qu'est-ce que je ne comprends pas peut-être ? Pourquoi on a fait une chose comme ça ? Et pourquoi je trouve ça affreux ? Est-ce que c'est parce que ça ne me rend pas joyeuse ? Est-ce que c'est parce que je ne comprends pas ? Est-ce que je trouve ça simplement, finalement inesthétique et que ça sort trop du contexte ? » ou peut-être par manque de culture ? Mais étant donné moi qui aime que ça me touche, que les gens me touchent. Alors il y a quelque chose qui ne me touche pas. Je me dis « attend pourquoi ça ne me touche pas ? » Et puis après, je me dis « non, peut-être je ne suis pas prête à ça, et peut-être qu'il faut qu'on m'apprenne à voir différemment ou percevoir différemment. » (...) Mais puisqu'on définit clairement des concepts, oui, pour résumer, la beauté me touche et la laideur m'interpelle.” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

In the aesthetic state of mind, individuals exhibit freedom from normal practical concerns, which paves the way to the importation of thoughts, feelings, and experiences about objects other than the one being looked at. In “The Aesthetics of Architecture” (1979), Scruton bounced off this thought in order to explore the role of imagination in the experience of architecture. He argues that the “experience of architecture - because it reflects an underlying act of imaginative attention - belongs to the active and not passive part of mind. It is, in a certain sense, free; it can therefore express the full burden of our intellectual conceptions, can be altered and amended through argument, can impose unity and order on its object when the literal mind would see nothing but disjointedness or chaos” (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 103). He then concludes that “changes in taste are continuous with, and indeed inseparable from, changes in one's whole outlook on the world, and that taste is as much a part of one's rational nature as are scientific judgements, social conventions and moral ideals” (Scruton, Scruton, and Sparshott 1979, 106).

However, if the aesthetic is completely free from the ethical, how can the aesthetic dimension ever inform a person's actions? Each and every one of the participants in the study claimed that aesthetics play a significant role in their decision-making processes. For some of them, aesthetic criteria even happens to be a fundamental criteria when they are faced with choosing one life story over another, or when they chose to live in one urban environment rather than another. This means that the relation between practical reason and aesthetic understanding cannot be easily bypassed.

“Pour moi, quelque chose qui est vraiment laid, c'est quelque chose dans le ressentiment d'une mauvaise action, plus que dans l'aspect physique ou représentatif, en fin de l'image quoi.” - Chantal, 56, périurbain (campagne)

“La laideur ? J'ai plus de peine de parler de la laideur. Pour moi la laideur, c'est plutôt les choses, genres des guerres ou gens qui profitent, qui abusent des faibles, pour moi c'est ça la laideur. Ce n'est pas physique, c'est moral. La laideur. (...) Pour moi, quelque chose qui est vraiment laid, c'est quelque chose dans le ressentiment d'une mauvaise action, plus que dans l'aspect physique ou représentatif.” - Chantal, 56, périurbain (campagne)

The Aesthetic Character of Existence

Views differ on whether ethics and aesthetics always inevitably overlap, whether one is more important than the other, and whether they can be separated from one another. Since the topic is almost inexhaustible, I will discuss only a small part of the broad issue of ethics and aesthetics by focusing mainly on choices concerning the inhabited urban environment. The traditional aesthetic inquiry that still dominates the discipline of aesthetics primarily analyzes the aesthetic experience of the spectator, who derives aesthetic pleasure or displeasure from the contemplation of an object (in most cases, an object of art). The spectator is usually observed as being liberated from any action, and is considered as being almost immobile and highly passive. In this sense, the realm of the ethical and the realm of the aesthetic are studied separately, ethics being concerned with human actions, and aesthetics with a sort of disinterested contemplation. If I consider more deeply the significance of this way of looking at things, aesthetics becomes a sort of second rate thing that could easily be ignored, while ethics becomes something that cannot be avoided simply because it affects our lives even when we choose to ignore it (because of the fact that the choice to ignore it is itself an ethical choice).³⁷

³⁷ Diana Collinson gave the overview of another well-known contrast between the two realms: “Ethical judgements are said to be made by reference to general rules and principles, whereas

Some scholars interested in everyday aesthetics are making important efforts to reintroduce the aesthetic dimension into our understanding of the everyday practical engagement with the world (Saito 2015). However, I believe that not enough has been done to explain how the aesthetic dimension influences our practical concerns, such as choosing a car over a bicycle, taking a train rather than a plane, hanging laundry outdoors or living in an apartment on the ground floor rather than in a rooftop loft. Nevertheless, our interviewees show little doubt when they claim that aesthetics plays an important role in their practical decisions in life, whether these are of minor or major importance:

“Esthétiquement je suis dans un endroit magnifique pour moi et j'irai habiter nulle part d'autre.” - Victoria, 59, périurbain (périurbain)

“S'il y'a quelque chose qui est laid, je ne vais pas le choisir, quel que soit le domaine justement.” - Mériel, 65, périurbain (bord de ville)

“Il y aurait matière à remplir les heures! Pour moi l'esthétique est une chose importante, pour tout: le choix des endroits où je vais, des voyages que je fais, des habits que je choisis.” - Peter, 63, ville (ville)

Thus, aesthetics is not only a matter of passively contemplating an aesthetic object, neither is it only a matter of carrying out a disinterested discourse about a space. Rather, the aesthetic dimension is part of a spatialized practical action. The aesthetic dimension changes the nature of a space because it changes the way an individual understands the object that makes a space. Since our existence as human beings involves both an alternating involvement with, and detachment from, the society, we escape in the realm of aesthetic only to realize that even the world of our imagination is based on our actual lived experience, which we relentlessly try to overcome. On the other hand, our practical day-to-day decisions are highly informed by this subjective imaginative world, which elicits some of our strongest emotions and guides us while we navigate narrow streets, wide beaches or dark forests. Although ethics seems to be the base upon which we form our aesthetic judgements, aesthetics constantly challenges the ethical categories. It simply does not allow them to firm up. Aesthetics continually gives rise to something new, something that can surprise us, and therefore, it creates a new set of meanings within our existing area of societal representations.

aesthetic judgements are made by reference to the particular features of what is judged. In an ethical matter we act towards some end, whereas in an aesthetic matter, we experience something for its own sake.” (Collinson 1985)

To understand how precisely ethics interweaves with aesthetics, I will take a closer look at the real aspect of the virtual. As Slavoy Zizek (2004) understands it, the reality of the virtual represents the “efficacy, effectiveness, real effects produced and generated by something which does not yet fully exist, which is not yet fully actual”. In this sense, the possibility of something does not simply precede its existence. Rather, the virtual is an aspect of the real precisely because the real, as Henri Bergson argues, is never fully realized (2012, 73-87). Zizek gives an example of an authoritarian father: In order to be experienced as actual and effective authority, paternal authority has to remain virtual, in the sense that it is a threat. A father who truly has authority only has to look at his children and they obey. If he loses his nerve and starts shouting and exhibiting force, his authority loses strength. Beauty operates in a similar manner. A beautiful city is the city through which one can imagine beautiful spatialities, and if it becomes actualized, can lead to disappointment. This phenomenon is known to the Japanese as the Paris syndrome. It manifests as the inability to reconcile an imbalance between the popular image of Paris and the reality of Paris. The Japanese often imagine Paris as a city of beauty, culture and romance. However, they soon find out that Paris is not what they had imagined it to be.³⁸ In this sense, some part of beauty must always partly remain virtual in order to be ‘operative’.

It is this fusion of the ethical and the aesthetic that often leads us towards a choice. The point I want to put forward is that when individuals make an aesthetic choice, the realm of the ethical and the realm of the aesthetic merge. Beliefs and imaginings, i.e., the actual and the virtual, co-exist with a common focus, informing one another. The structure that allows this co-existence is precisely the aesthetic space, which in turn interacts with other

³⁸ This is not a phenomenon reserved uniquely to Japanese people visiting European cities. In “The Confessions”, Jean-Jacques Rousseau describes his first impressions of the French capital: “How greatly did the entrance into Paris belie the idea I had formed of it! (...) I had imagined to myself a city of most imposing aspect, as beautiful as it was large, where nothing was to be seen but splendid streets, and palaces of gold and marble. Entering by the suburb of St Marceau, I saw nothing but dirty and stinking little streets, ugly black houses, a general air of slovenliness and poverty, beggars, carters, and menders of old clothes, criers of decoctions and old hats. All this, from outset, struck me so forcibly, that all the real magnificence I have seen in Paris has been unable to destroy this first impression, and I have always retained a secret dislike against residence in this capital. I may say that the whole time, during which I afterwards lived there, was employed solely in trying to find means to enable me to live away from it. Such is the fruit of a too lively imagination, which exaggerates beyond human exaggeration, and is always ready to see more than it has been told to expect. I had heard Paris so much praised, that I had represented it to myself as the ancient Babylon, where, if I had ever visited it, I should, perhaps, have founded it so much to take off from the picture which I had drawn of it. (...) the same thing always happen to me, when I see anything which has been too loudly announced; for it is impossible for men, and difficult for Nature herself, to surpass the exuberance of my imagination” (Rousseau 1996, 154).

human spaces through different forms of interspatialities.³⁹ This is why the aesthetic dimension always nourishes and informs our actions and processes of decision-making. It is precisely because the aesthetic also concerns the actual that the aesthetic can influence the ethical, contrary to Sartre's claim that beauty, as a value, can never be applied to the real actual object (Sartre and Elkaïm-Sartre 2004, 193). When dealing with an object, when making a decision, people are not only dealing with the actual present situation, but also with the virtual image of that given situation. This beauty has a reality itself, in the sense that it nonetheless structures the way people act in the world. Thomas, who is a student and has experienced some difficulties in finding an apartment in the city of Lausanne, describes the interaction of the aesthetic and the practical:

“Je pense quand tu visites un appartement et déjà quand tu arrives, et tu n'as encore pas vu l'appartement, mais déjà la maison ou le lieu qui entoure, ça te fait déjà une grande influence, sur ton choix. Tu n'as pas vu l'appartement, déjà tu fais le choix. Ah oui ça me plaît, ça ne me plaît pas. Entre guillemets, c'est beau, ce n'est pas beau. Ça, c'est vrai, dans l'appartement même. Il y a une grande importance, pas forcément d'efficacité, mais de question de conception du lieu, si ça était bien concipé ou pas. Et après, je pense aussi de la beauté. (...) Parce que même si c'est totalement bien concipé mais chaque jour tu entres dans la maison et tu te dis que ça te plaît pas, tu te sens pas forcément à l'aise. En même temps, si c'est super joli tu te dis chaque jour que la vue est jolie ou c'est beau, mais que, genre, si ce n'est pas bien concipé, genre, la cuisine est à un endroit ou ça ne vas pas du tout, ça ne va pas non plus, je pense. Je pense finalement quand même, on a plus tendance à tomber vers le: ah c'est beau, c'est pas parfaitement bien concipé mais bon, ça nous plaît quand même. Je pense c'est plus probable d'aller dans ce choix-là que dans l'autre. C'est vrai.” - Thomas, 25, ville (campagne)

Aesthetic values “have a kind of authority in practical reasoning that no mere preference can acquire. Not only is one called upon to justify with reasons when necessary, one must also learn to see and understand the world in terms of them. A value, unlike a mere preference, expresses itself in language such as that used by Alberti: it pursues what is right, fitting, appropriate and just. (...) A value is characterized not by its strength but by its depth, by the extent to which it brings order to experience.” (Scruton 1979, 32) Claudia and Daniela describe how aesthetics can sometimes precede the practical:

“Typiquement, en termes de logement, je ne me verrais pas habiter dans une maison que je ne trouve pas jolie et dans laquelle je ne me sens pas bien, ou ça c'est un autre nuance, mais c'est vrai que l'esthétique compte. (...) Mais évidemment il

³⁹ Jacques Lévy isolates three types of interspatiality: interface, nesting and cospatiality (Lévy 2014, 49).

y a le facteur argent qui compte aussi, on est d'accord. Mais l'argent... Enfin, le côté beau c'est sûr que je vais d'abord regarder ce qui me plaît et puis après on regarde si c'est possible ou pas.” - Claudia, 34, périurbain (petite ville)

“À mon avis, c'est primordial [l'esthétique]. Par rapport à l'acquisition d'une maison, d'un appartement. (...) On ne va pas aller habiter dans un endroit où on se dit, quand on regarde le bâtiment, on se dit "bof". Ce n'est pas mon truc? Par contre il est peut-être situé juste à l'endroit où... voilà, proche des transports publics, proche de l'autoroute, etc., et si pour moi la maison d'habitat général ne me plaît pas, il ne faut juste pas insister, cela ne sert à rien. Moi je crois au coup de coeur quand on est dans l'acquisition d'un habitat donc il faut que... oui, oui il faut que l'esthétique me plaise.” - Daniela, 43, périurbain (banlieue)

The more humans individualize themselves, the more they want to subjectivize their environment. Nicole described some difficulties of living in an environment that was aesthetically unpleasant for her, which in turn led her to move away:

“Ici, je suis locataire. Avant de venir ici, je devais quitter la maison où j'étais parce qu'on s'est séparé avec mon mari, et j'ai été visiter des appartements, des appartements, des appartements et je me suis retrouvée dans un appartement avec la vue sur le bâtiment voisin ou sur une décharge ou sur, oui, une usine, je me suis dit: je ne peux pas. Parce que pour moi c'est très important. Donc, quand je suis arrivée dans cet appartement ici, j'ai dit, bon, ce n'est pas tout à fait la beauté que je préfère, mais c'est joli, et puis je peux faire quelque chose où je me sente bien. Puis la vue est extraordinaire et tout ça, puis je me suis dit, ben voilà c'est là.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

Luisa even considers that beauty holds the promise of happiness:

“- Je n'aurais pas envie de rentrer chez moi si l'endroit ne me plaisait pas. Je n'aurais pas envie d'y vivre. J'aurais juste envie de fuir. Voilà. Il faut que je me sente bien dans l'endroit. Quand on avait acheté cette maison, on en avait visité pas mal. On rentre dans une maison, alors justement, que ce soit l'obscurité, que ce soit des murs bas, que ce soit des couleurs ou simplement l'architecture intérieure, on se sent tout de suite bien ou on se sent pas bien. On est arrivé dans cette maison, on s'est tout de suite sentis bien. Donc, visuellement, je trouve que c'est très très important. Il faut se sentir à l'aise dans l'endroit. Il y a des endroits où on n'a pas envie d'être.

- Pour vous, se sentir à l'aise, ça veut dire quoi?

- Un sentiment de bien-être. C'est quelque chose d'interne. On se sent heureux dans un endroit et malheureux dans un autre, enfin. Ce n'est peut-être pas à ce point-là mais c'est un sentiment de bien-être oui. De joie. Moi quand je suis entrée

ici, je me sentais euphorique, je me sentais chez moi, je me sentais bien. J'avais envie d'y rester. (...) Pour moi, [la beauté] est d'une importance capitale." - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

Naturally, it would be wrong to assume that the aesthetic dimension informs all of our decisions — indeed, people are capable of dissociating the two realms:

“- Est-ce que tu dissocies le bien et le beau?

- Oui, je pense que j'arrive à dissocier. (...) C'est légitime d'avoir des choses comme ça, parce que ça répond à un besoin, ce qui n'empêche que ce n'est pas beau. Voilà.” - Christine, 40, périurbain (banlieue)

It is also important to point out that beauty does not necessarily lead to action. A person might find a thing beautiful and express a total lack of interest in it, in terms of actual involvement with it:

“[Photo 16] Là je connais aussi ça. C'est sur Genève. Ça ressemble à une rue à Lausanne mais c'est Genève. Alors oui, c'est ces styles anciens, voilà, je pense, les hauts plafonds à l'intérieur, les parquets qui craquent, c'est esthétique voilà. Oui c'est esthétique, c'est joli, je ne pense pas que j'aimerais habiter là, mais c'est, voilà, c'est par rapport à Montreux, là c'est harmonieux pour moi. C'est de beaux bâtiments, c'est, la vue, c'est dégagé mais je n'y habiterai pas parce que ça ne correspond pas du tout à mon style, mais c'est joli.” - Daniela, 43, périurbain (banlieue)

“J'adore les villes, je pense que je suis quand même une citadine. Si on me dit: “va habiter dans la campagne”, pour moi, ce n'est quand même pas mon truc. Je pense que je suis citadine dans l'âme, mais les villes restent belles à visiter pour moi, pas forcément à y vivre. (...) Oui je n'ai jamais vécu au centre-ville, d'une ville, jamais. Même si j'étais une fois, j'ai vécu quatre ans du côté de Vevey-Montreux, je n'étais pas à Vevey-Montreux. J'étais un petit peu en dessus. Même si j'ai vécu à Sydney, puis je vivais à l'extérieur, pas, même pas au centre-ville, j'adorais y aller. J'adore aller au centre-ville, me balader, shopping...etc. mais je ne me vois pas y habiter.” - Daniela, périurbain (banlieue)

When a person is focusing on an object and an element of the scene provokes a negative aesthetic judgment, they find themselves in front of an aesthetic dilemma. The dilemma means “that we are divided between two conflicting ways of dealing with something that we initially do not aesthetically enjoy: one is to change the world such that the object of aesthetic displeasure is eliminated; the other is to educate people to change their aesthetic sensibilities such that the object, although itself unchanged, can be experienced as

aesthetically pleasing” (Carlson, 1976, p.69). Walter spoke of this dilemma in the following manner:

“Soit je vais intervenir sur l'objet pour retrouver cette harmonie que j'ai, ou bien je vais me débrouiller pour aller vivre ailleurs. Transitoirement je peux accepter, mais je ne vais pas m'attacher. Maintenant je peux aussi m'attacher à un endroit et le quitter. (...) Attachement cela ne veut pas dire les pieds coulés dans le béton. Ça ne veut pas dire une absence de mobilité.” - Walter, 60, village-périurbain (campagne)

Other individuals described similar situations:

“Alors je me suis toujours interrogée est-ce que c'était plus important d'avoir des voisins qui ont une plus belle maison que soi-même ? Il vaut peut-être mieux avoir la vue sur quelque chose de beau que d'être dans quelque chose de beau qu'on peut pas voir.” - Christine, 40, périurbain (banlieue)

“On peut changer l'esthétique. (...) Je ne resterais pas dans un endroit qui pourrait me plaire, mais dont l'esthétique n'est pas à mon goût (...) je changerais l'esthétique. Des meubles, des fleurs à droite à gauche, ou de la lumière, ou un coup de peinture, enfin quelque chose. Je ne resterais pas dans un endroit qui ne me plaît pas. Ça ne m'est jamais arrivé.” - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

“On peut trouver beau parce qu'on y rajoutera de soi. (...) Cet appartement, il ne me plaisait pas donc, je n'étais pas bien. Mais je l'ai rendu beau, enfin, l'intérieur, pour finir, je m'y suis sentie bien le temps que j'y étais, parce que je me suis dit ben voilà c'est pour un laps de temps, il faut que je me mette et puis, je me suis fait, je me suis créé un cocon avec des choses que j'aimais. Donc oui, je l'ai rendu beau. Mais ça n'a pas empêché que l'endroit, le tour du cocon n'était pas beau, était laid. (...) Mais je pense qu'il y a des moments où on ne peut pas dépasser. Le laid, il est laid. On y rajoute des petites pointes de beauté, mais c'est éphémère.” - Sara, 48, ville (campagne)

In any and all cases, beauty emerges when a person adds something of himself or herself to a societal object, when an object of contemplation becomes a sort of extension of the self. This is why Scruton argues that “we must then search for that core of experience, for that ‘surplus’ in which we find ourselves reflected, not as creatures of the moment, consumed in the present activity, but as rational beings, with a past, a present and a future”. (1979, 35) People try to identify themselves with the aesthetic object and it then becomes a part of their own existence, reflecting an image of their virtual fulfillment. The aesthetic is precisely devoted to the task of endowing the world with meaning in this way. Lara argues that the way we as humans organize our residential spaces in fact reflects

an image of our existence in the world. This resembles Foucault's idea that the modern subject constitutes itself by establishing a certain "aesthetics of existence", where ethics and aesthetics converge so closely that it is tempting to consider one's life as an object of art (Thacker 1993).

"Je pense que c'est une forme de reflet. Je pense qu'on agence son... en tous cas si on devait parler d'un appartement ou d'une maison, je pense que c'est assez le reflet de ce qu'on est et de la manière dont on vit et de la manière dont on aimerait être bien chez soi." - Lara, 30, ville (ville)

Aesthetic Judgements as Unactualised Societal Choices

An aesthetic dilemma does not only reveal itself when one chooses between one pair of jeans or another, or between the white or yellow wallpaper. Aesthetic judgements are primarily societal choices. When an individual claims that this car or that house is beautiful, he/she does it with an idea of a society that comes with it. Maria, who has lived in a city her whole life, clearly expresses her disapproval of the neighbouring peri-urban environment — an ethical position which directly affects her aesthetic judgment:

"Et ça, c'est une petite zone villas. Je ne sais pas ou ? Voilà. Alors. Je n'ai rien à dire beaucoup. (...) Ça, c'est dans toute l'Europe. Il y a des zones comme ça. C'est à dire des zones avec des maisons individuelles. Très collées, les unes avec les autres, puisque la terre est très chère. (...) Ça, c'est la fin d'une civilisation pour moi. Non, j'exagère. C'est un peu dommage. Ça a un côté, ça manque de partage. Chacun veut son petit espace, mais quand même collé aux autres. Moi j'aime bien voir des voisins autour de la maison. C'est plus la vie je trouve. Après, des gens disent: je suis le propriétaire. Je suis chez moi. Mon jardin. Mon garage. Mais l'espace qu'ils ont n'est pas immense. Ceux qui ont beaucoup, c'est ceux qui ont beaucoup d'argent et qui ont un grand jardin autour. Voilà." - Maria, 59, ville (ville)

Martin and Sophie share the same aesthetic sensibility as Maria with regards to the peri-urban environment:

"Je trouve un peu moyen, quand même. (...) Et puis on voit les maisons, qui sont avec un garage fermé, ce n'est pas très vivant. (...) Oui, ça fait un peu trop » villa ça me suffit ». Oui, je pense que c'est un peu ça qui me dérange, oui." - Martin, 22, ville (ville)

“- [Photo 7] Alors là, je trouve ça horrible. C'est vraiment la maison mitoyenne des années... ça n'a pas l'air trop vieux mais, ça a un peu commencé dans les années '90 comme ça ou je ne sais plus. Ça, ça me plaît pas, vraiment pas du tout.

- Pourquoi?

- Parce qu'ici il y a une sorte de diversité mais en même temps une sorte d'uniformité. Parce qu'il y a des blocs qui se ressemblent avec des sortes d'originalité dans les toits, par exemple, que je trouve pas très intéressante et puis de nouveau, on est dans ce truc où chacun a son petit bout de jardin, je ne sais pas ce n'est pas... Pourquoi je n'aime pas? C'est une bonne question. Parce que ça sent la petite bagarre autour de la petite barrière, la petite séparation de jardin. Genre, on veut vivre ensemble, mais on ne veut pas vivre ensemble. Je ne sais pas, il y a un petit truc un peu... je n'aime pas trop. Voilà.” - Sophie, 36, ville (périurbain)

Anna and Barbara, who both live in an individual house close to a historical village, find in a “chaotic” variety of the rich commune of Lutry, an image of anonymous individuals who do not cultivate any sense of community in their immediate residential environment:

“[Photo 8] Ce que je n'aime pas c'est le côté éclaté des constructions. Cette incroyable variété. J'ai l'impression qu'ici le propriétaire est architecte, en ayant un chèque en blanc. À part pour les hauteurs, parce qu'il y a une certaine cohérence. Il n'y a rien qui sort. Il n'y a pas de gratte-ciel, mais, oui... Il y a de tout. Il y a des constructions en escaliers. Il y a des bâtiments modernes, très vitrés. Il y a des résidus, pas la première moitié du 20e siècle, qui ne sont pas particulièrement folichon, mais voilà. (...) Chacun vient dormir, faire ses courses. Ça ne parle pas le vivre ensemble, se retrouver au bistro, faire la fête. C'est des logements, c'est des habitations, c'est un dortoir.” - Anna, 60, village-périurbain (petite ville)

“[Photo 8] Oh la la la ! Quel fouillis ! Ah oui ça c'est en arrivant sur Pully. Non, mais ça, c'est n'importe quoi. Pour moi ça c'est, alors c'est moche. Je suis sûre que tous ces gens ont une vue extraordinaire, mais je trouve ça, mais laid. Je trouve ça, c'est le fous-y-tout, à chacun sa petite idée. Ils sont à deux mètres les uns des autres, puis chacun c'est son style c'est n'importe quoi.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

Chantal, who lives in an individual peri-urban house, thinks that the repetitiveness of single-family houses near the town of Roche can tell us a lot about the community that lives there:

“- [Photo 7] C'est les nouvelles constructions de Roche. Oui, on est effectivement à la montagne. Alors je trouve ça, ces maisons qui se ressemblent tac tac tac, je trouve

ça mortel, mortel. Autant celles-ci que n'importe lesquelles. Parce que derrière, ça a l'air d'être le même topo. Alors moi je me dis vivement qu'il y aient des grands arbres qui poussent pour un petit peu enlever cette espèce de... Non je trouve ça moche.

- Alors ce qui est moche c'est le côté... ?

- Le côté répétitif. Répétitif surtout. En plus le bleu, ça me donne froid. Donc le bleu je ne l'aime pas trop, mais c'est bon. Mais que ça soit répétitif comme ci ou comme ça donc tu vas à Chavornay, ils ont fait tout un quartier où c'est la même chose. Alors c'est moche, je trouve que ça fait pas... Alors, il me semble que ça doit avoir de l'influence sur la vue du quartier. Ça m'a toujours fait cet effet-là.

- De quelle manière ? Tu as dit que le fait que ce soit répétitif influence la vie du quartier ?

- Négatif, comme ça. Je trouve que ça a un effet négatif, enfin, sur la relation des gens entre eux. Je ne sais pas pourquoi, parce que c'est mon idée à moi. C'est un ressenti à moi. Bon, ce sont des quartiers neufs. Évidemment, c'est le problème des quartiers neufs, mais il me semble que la relation des gens entre eux dans les maisons qui se répètent de la même chose, la relation doit être plus difficile entre les gens que si chacun a une maison différente. Parce que peut être déjà si les maisons sont différentes, les gens qui viendront y habiter auront aussi des caractères différents, donc ça fera une autre dynamique d'habitants. Non, déjà rien que de voir ça... Chaque fois qu'on passe là devant, je me dis oh là, là, quelle horreur." - Chantal, 65, périurbain (campagne)

Claudia, who grew up in a small town on the coast of the Lake Geneva, and now lives in a house, shared her view on low rent-controlled housing (fr. habitation à loyer modéré - HLM), that is, a form of public or private housing found in France and Switzerland.

" - Voilà ce que j'aime un peu moins, les gros blocs comme ça. Pour moi, il y a juste rien d'esthétique, en fait. Rien de très joli. Si ce n'est les fleurs qu'ils ont rajoutées pour essayer d'améliorer la situation. C'est des immeubles, des blocs, rien de spécial, quoi. Enfin, si je pouvais ne pas avoir besoin d'y vivre, tant mieux, quoi.

- Et pourquoi ça t'évoque tout de suite ce sentiment ?

- Moi ce côté très carré, bloc, je n'aime pas trop. Probablement que c'est un peu associé à cette image des HLM plutôt négative, si tu veux. Tu te dis « Il y a peut-être de la délinquance », ou bien peut-être le niveau social des gens est pas forcément élevé, ça n'a pas besoin de l'être, je veux dire. Mais c'est vrai que si tu me donnes à choisir ça et le quartier de villas à Coligny, les premières photos-là, ça me donne plus envie. Mais peut-être parce que, peut-être que j'ai un côté un peu bourge, je ne sais pas. C'est vrai que ça ne m'attire pas beaucoup, mais peut-être parce que justement, si j'ai le droit de rêver, bah voilà, je rêve pas à ça, tu vois. Après c'est ce côté assez, un peu comme des blocs soviétiques, comme ça. Oui, je sais pourquoi ils ont été construits, créés et tant mieux, c'est très bien, mais, c'est pas ce que je trouve le plus joli, quoi." - Claudia, 34, périurbain (petite ville)

Silvia, who rejects the “forced” cohabitation that appears in collective low-income housing blocs, has a similar aesthetic understanding regarding the buildings:

“[Photo 3] Ça c’est horrible. Ah mon dieu, dieu me préserve d’habiter au quinzième étage d’une tour. Néanmoins on a quand même l’impression, c’est quand même, la nature est respectée, y a beaucoup de verdure, donc les gens peuvent se sentir moins dans du béton, mais est-ce qu’ils ont le sentiment d’être moins dans du béton? (...) Mais toutes ces tours, ces alignements de grands immeubles, ces alignements d’appartements, mon dieu c’est de l’entassement de gens. C’est une cohabitation forcée.” - Silvia, 55, périurbain (périurbain)

What I learned from the examples stated above is that aesthetic judgement is based on a certain idea of a society. However, the particularity of this kind of judgement is that it is made without any regard for the actuality of the premises upon which those judgements are based. Aesthetic attention often requires what John Keats called “negative capability,” that is, the ability to contemplate the world without any particular desire to reconcile its contradictory aspects, or fit it into rational systems. It reflects our capacity “of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Keats 1899, 277). If aesthetic judgement is a particular type of societal choice, then I can conclude that in the aesthetic mode people exhibit a particular sort of aesthetic justice, which might or might not necessarily correspond to their ethical principles of justice. When one claims that a thing is ugly or beautiful, one produces, in one and the same act, with more or less doubt, an image that tells the story of a certain societal situation:

“[Photo 9] - Ces pauvres arbres, ils ne doivent pas se plaire. Ça pour moi, c’est vraiment se moquer du monde. Allez, on te met quatre arbres là au milieu et puis c’est magnifique, t’as la verdure.

- Ça ne vous plait pas donc ? A part le manque de verdure...

- Ah ! Non. Pas du tout. Ces petites places de jeux, là au milieu. J’ai même l’impression qu’il n’y a pas de bancs, il n’y a pas... ça m’a pas l’air très convivial. Pour moi, c’est vraiment l’excuse. On y met et puis comme ça on a fait ce qu’on devait. On devait mettre une place de jeux. Non, ce n’est pas beau.” - Martha, 65, ville (campagne)

“Alors, c’est un quartier, je dirais, au centre de la ville un peu. Lausanne belle époque. A la fois, un peu bourgeois, mais pas bourgeois très friqué, genre Rumine et plus à l’est, hein. Je dirais plutôt un peu bourgeois, un bourgeois bobo, un tout petit peu bohème, mais avec aussi des éléments plus populaires, je dirais.” - Peter, 63, ville (ville)

“- Oui ça c'est beau. Les immeubles alignés, le même style. Les appartements qui de l'intérieur doivent être pas mal. On a la rue mais on a quand même de l'espace. C'est une rue résidentielle j'imagine donc on ne doit pas avoir beaucoup de circulation. Pour vivre en ville, ça serait bien un quartier, un quartier pas mal. Mais je ne sais pas si les gens se connaissent à part ça. Je ne sais pas si de temps en temps on ferme la rue pour mettre les tables dehors pour boire un verre et faire connaissance avec les gens du quartier. Je ne suis pas sûre. Mais c'est de beaux bâtiments. (...)

- Vous faites ça dans votre quartier où vous habitez?

- Oui, on a fait ça pendant 8 ans, mais cette année il n'y a pas eu parce que ceux qui devaient organiser sont fâchés avec d'autres. Bon, c'est le quartier. Là, j'aimerais croire qu'il y a du quartier. ” - Silvia, 55, périurbain (périurbain)

“Ce qui me gêne le plus, c'est que la paroi vitrée est taguée et ça, ça m'énerve parce que, ce ne sont pas les tags en soi parce que ne sont pas des tags méchants ni quoi que. Ça soit même que ça pourrait être très harmonieux même. C'est cet irrespect du bien public, voilà, parce qu'il y a un mur en béton, et on est obligé d'aller taguer et ça, ça m'agace. Peut-être que je n'ai jamais rencontré de tagueur, pas tenter, qui pourrait m'expliquer pourquoi il faut taguer des murs en béton, c'est plutôt ça qui me dérange. Le fait que l'autoroute passe, comme je l'utilise tous les jours, je ne vais pas me plaindre de l'autoroute quand même. Voilà.” – Silvia, 55, périurbain (périurbain)

All these interviews reveal that ethics and aesthetics cannot remain separated by the abyss that was constructed by Kantian philosophy, each concept jealously defending its own autonomy. Jurgen Habermas specifically focused on this problem when he claimed that a “reified everyday praxis can be cured only by creating unconstrained interaction of the cognitive with the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive elements” (Foster 1985, 11-12). One might say that aesthetic knowledge is a form of practical reasoning, only it is a particular type of reasoning that, according to Scruton, is “characterised by no specific desire to ‘find out’, no special preoccupation with facts, since while these may be a necessary pre-condition for its exercise, their knowledge is no part of its aim. (...) it retains the character of freedom which is one of the distinguishing marks of an imaginative act” (Scruton 1979, 87). As aesthetic judgement involves a cognitive act, and so it would be safer to say that aesthetics is based on facts but these facts are ontologically subjective.

Here lies the true force of aesthetic judgment, for when an aesthetic object strikes someone as beautiful, it is impossible to simultaneously experience it and to believe that that judgement might be wrong. This fact is well known to political actors who have

used this knowledge for various political purposes. As one of the most striking examples, Susan Sontag provides an example of Nazi Germany, where the confusion between reality and fantasy, expressed in films like Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph of the Will", can be taken as emblematic of the illusory aesthetic spectacle which simmered at the heart of fascist politics (1975). Such freewheeling aestheticism comes with the certain danger of aestheticising the whole of reality, which in turn represents the true danger of totalitarian political systems. Within this line of thought, Hannah Arendt observed that: "The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, true and false, no longer exists." (1973) Here it might be interesting to notice that the aesthetic dimension is highly neglected in electoral geography, and generally in studies whose purpose is to better understand why people vote for one political option or another (or why they do not vote at all).

In the aesthetic mode, individuals are still concerned with the practical but they move the practical into the realm of virtual. In this sense, individuals become partially free from the burdens of the actual. Aesthetics is ethics without actual obligations. If in aesthetics everything is not permitted, it is precisely because everything is not permitted in ethics. But this is not a reason to dismiss aesthetics as being inferior to ethics. On the contrary, it is precisely because aesthetics provides a feeling of freedom to human beings that we constantly go back to it and reflect upon it. Finally, aesthetic judgement, if subjected to a serious analysis, can teach us a lot about what the deepest societal dreams are. Through such an approach, it might be possible to "come to an ethics that is more than a formal principle, but has a body and a heart" (Berleant 1999, 364). In the famous lines of "The Social Contract", Rousseau speaks of the most important form of law as one "which is not graven on tablets of marble or brass, but on the hearts of the citizens. This forms the real constitution of State, takes on every day new powers, when other laws decay or die out, restores them or takes their place, keeps a people in the ways it was meant to go, and insensibly replaces authority by the force of habit" (Rousseau 1938, p.12). In this sense, I must agree with Terry Eagleton that power is somehow "inscribed in the minutiae of subjective experience" (1991, 20). Inadequately accounting for this fact may come at a high cost.

The Aesthetics of Everyday Life

In “The Practice of Everyday Life” (1984 [1980]), Michel de Certeau argues that the social sciences lack a formal means by which to examine the ways in which people re-appropriate societal artefacts in everyday situations. With no clear understanding of how ordinary people subvert the rituals and representations that social structures seek to impose upon them, the social sciences risk creating nothing other than a picture of passive consumers who follow institutionalized order without any possibility of re-creating or re-producing it. His study stands today as a classical text that teaches us that the realm of repetitive practices, such as walking, talking, reading or cooking, include elements of creative resistance of ordinary people to repressive aspects of modern society. According to de Certeau everyday life is made of various “clever tricks” of the “weak” within the space established by the “strong”. In the influential chapter “Walking in the City”, he examines how the act of walking through the city involves taking various shortcuts and improvisation by which the pedestrian transforms the spatial order of a street. If researchers could observe the totality of such tactical acts, we would find that they substantially alter the nature of urban space for they actualize some possibilities that were not previously considered by institutionalized aspects of a society.

In his analysis, de Certeau is primarily concerned with the practical, i.e., the ethical, aspects of the spatial tactics he describes. However, my argument here is that people create the world not only in the realm of actual, but also in the realm of imagination, which further influences urban spatialities. Aesthetic considerations might lead people to either affirm and respect the social and economic pressures from “above”, or to try and transgress it. Individuals can alter the character of urban spaces not only by using them in an unusual manner, but also by reflecting upon it in a way that transforms the object into something else. When someone walks from point A to point B, they might take a path that is twice as long simply because the environment of the second path is aesthetically more appealing. Aesthetics intervene in various acts of everyday selection between one street or another, one shop or another, one park or another. Space is not only practiced, it is also imaginatively inhabited. Thus the aesthetic dimension constantly changes the character of the world.

“Le fait d’être, je pense, avec ce verger derrière, moi je trouve ça vraiment super beau. Quand tu fais ta vaisselle et tu as la vue sur la nature pratiquement, puis typiquement le matin quand il fait nuit, tu as l’église du village qui est un peu perchée, si tu veux, tu la vois au loin, elle est éclairée, donc ça fait un peu comme une cathédrale, si tu veux, que tu vois au loin. Donc c’est assez beau comme

paysage, directement, ce qu'on voit depuis la cuisine.” - Claudia, 34, périurbain (bord de ville)

As Yuriko Saito writes, the flow of everyday life includes “doing things by handling an object, executing an act, and producing certain results, all motivated by aesthetic considerations” (Saito 2015). If researchers dismiss everyday experiences from the aesthetic discourse only because they do not enter into a classical format of analysis, or because they “cannot be subjected to a verdict-oriented discourse” (Saito 2015), we will simply impoverish the understanding of people’s day-to-day existence, which is actually highly aesthetic.

“Pour moi, c’est un crédo, l’esthétique et la beauté, parce que c’est ce qui nourrit l’âme en dehors de mes yeux et de ma vie. (...) Ça me fait vivre. Ça me relie au plus haut. Ça m’apaise. Ça me rend curieuse.” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

If someone is aesthetically attracted to something, they exhibit a sort of aesthetic agency that activates their capacity and willingness to act upon other components of a society. This aesthetic agency is actualised by protecting or maintaining the aesthetic value of the object or environment they find aesthetically appealing. On the other hand, if their aesthetic judgement towards an object or an environment is negative or unpleasant, they might decide to discard or ignore the object or the environment in question. While numerous aesthetes still argue against the idea of projecting the ethical and political realm into the sphere of the aesthetics, our metropolitan dumping grounds as well as the Earths’ oceans keep getting filled with ugly objects that were fashionable just five years ago.

“La laideur. Alors, (...) tout aussi subjectif et tout ça, et puis y aura une sensation peut-être de, une forme de rejet, dans les extrêmes il y aura une forme de dégoût peut-être, face à quelque chose de laid. Il y aura un sentiment contre voilà. Peut-être que la beauté il y a un sentiment qui va vers, qu'on a envie d'embrasser, tandis que dans quelque chose de laid, il y aura une prise de distance.” - Lara, 30, ville (ville)

My position is that everyday experiences are replete with aesthetic character, to the extent that any real situation of consciousness in the world is pregnant with the aesthetic. From the earliest stages of human history, a specific form of imaginative consciousness developed in which the aesthetic relations of man to reality were established. Aesthetic concepts and the aesthetic experience are important, for they open us up to particular aspects of human existence that we wouldn't otherwise have access to.

The Aesthetic Network: A Topology of Aesthetic Places

Various aesthetic objects or environments, upon which the actuality and virtuality of an aesthetic experience depends, can be reunited under the general concept of aesthetic place. Two fundamental conditions need to be satisfied in order for a societal object to become an aesthetic space. First, the object needs to enter into the constitution of a space whose substance is primarily defined by the aesthetic dimension. And second, the distance between the constitutive elements of the object must be considered as non-relevant from an aesthetic point of view. Any societal reality can become an aesthetic place, from a painting to a landscape. Take for example the city of Venice, which has circulated in the bloodstream of world culture for many decades. Many visitors of Venice have experienced the following phenomenon: No matter where they move or which street they cross, they find themselves immersed in a single space defined by its aesthetic components. The whole city, including its churches, houses, gardens, streets and squares, its canals and surrounding islands become an exceptional analogon, i.e., an aesthetic place par excellence, which allows them to engage in a deep aesthetic experience. For a contemporary visitor who finds him/herself enjoying the city, Venice becomes “semi-transparent”, a fairy tale and a tourist trap at the same time. Thomas Mann writes about this in one of his celebrated novels:

“This was Venice, the flattering and suspect beauty – this city, half fairy tale and half tourist trap, in whose insalubrious air the arts once rankly and voluptuously blossomed, where composers have been inspired to lulling tones of somniferous eroticism. Gripped by his adventure, the traveler felt his eyes drinking in this sumptuousness, his ears wooed by these melodies; he remembered, too, that the city was stricken with sickness and concealing it for reasons of cupidity, and he peered around still more wildly in search of the gondola that hovered ahead.” (Mann 2012)

During their lifetime, humans create a network of aesthetic places. It is one of the many ways by which humans appropriate and imaginatively inhabit a three-dimensional topographical space of the material world. They do this by turning the material world into a topological network composed of various aesthetic places. The character of this space (its formal structure) can be well grasped by relating it to the concepts of synecdoche and asyndeton, developed by J.F. Augoyard, a French philosopher and musicologist. Augoyard’s work on walking and urban ambiances highly influenced the

writings of Michel de Certeau, and more particularly in his essay "Walking in the City", where he writes:

“Synecdoche consists in ‘using a word in a sense which is part of another meaning of the same word’. In essence, it names a part instead of the whole which includes it. Thus ‘sail’ is taken for ‘ship’ in the expression ‘a fleet of fifty sails’; in the same way, a brick shelter or a hill is taken for the park in the narration of a trajectory. Asyndeton is the suppression of linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs, either within a sentence or between sentences. In the same way, in walking it selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips over links and whole parts that it omits. (...) Synecdoche re-places totalities by fragments (a less in the place of a more); asyndeton disconnects them by eliminating the conjunctive or the consecutive (nothing in place of something). Synecdoche makes more dense: it amplifies the detail and miniaturizes the whole. Asyndeton cuts out: it undoes continuity and undercuts its plausibility. A space treated in this way and shaped by practices is transformed into enlarged singularities and separate islands” (1984, 101).

To be able to produce aesthetic space, humans use both spatial techniques explained by de Certeau. Indeed, when we observe an object or an environment in the aesthetic mode, some elements rise from the scene and “excite” us. In a certain way, they jump out to the point that they fill the entire picture. These elements could correspond to pretty much anything: They could be something that reminds us of our childhood, a close friend’s house, or a girl in a street crowd. These details, this surplus with a higher value, are often taken to be an analogon of a whole. In this sense, a house can be experienced in a way that the fragments such as moldings, cornices, door handles, drawers, chests and wardrobes replace the totality, while conjunctions between the fragments remain totally or partially omitted. Anna and Barbara put it in the following manner:

“Ce qui participe au beau de l’espace construit pour moi, ce sont les détails. Ce sont les détails, les particularités de finition, de moulures, de corniches, des encadrements de portes, les éléments de fermeture. Par exemple chez moi les fermetures en espagnolettes des vitrages aujourd’hui quand vous avez besoin de mettre des vitres dans une maison on vous propose du standard qui ne comporte plus ce type de fermeture. Quand ils ont mis le doublage des vitres, j’ai voulu qu’ils ne m’enlèvent pas ça. Ce sont des détails comme ça. Parce qu’ils me racontent la création de cette maison en 1930” - Anna, 60, village-périurbain (petite ville)

“Mais vous voyez par exemple, je suis allée en Inde, avec mon mari, on est partis avec un bus VW jusqu'en Inde et à Istanbul on a passé quelques jours, puis on est allés dans les vieux quartiers. Il y avait encore toutes ces maisons en bois, et puis c'était fascinant, c'était beau, mais c'était très très beau, mais on trouvait ça beau ! (...) Ces maisons étaient belles et puis chaque maison, justement a la trace, voilà, chaque maison avait la trace des gens qui y ont vécu parce que, quelqu'un faisait une dentelle en bois très complexe là, au-dessus de la porte, un autre c'était plus simple, un autre c'était les couleurs, quelqu'un d'autre avait mis, il y avait ces fameuses, ces heurtoirs pour taper à la porte, les mains là, il y en avait, voilà, on voyait qu'il y en avait des sophistiqués, des moins sophistiqués. Enfin chacun, c'est ça aussi la poésie, c'est de voir la trace des gens. Comme un tissu fait à la main où on trouve une erreur et y a une dame ou un monsieur qui a fait cette erreur derrière donc il y a sa trace.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

In "The Poetics of Space" Bachelard introduces the concept of "topoanalysis" to describe "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (Bachelard and Jolas 1994, 8). He wanted to investigate intimacy, immensity, intensity, vastness, the insides, and the outsides of our memories of a house and its various parts. He was guided by the conviction that our memories are not simple past experiences that are recalled from the past but rather that they are interweaved with the present, a part of our ongoing actual experience. For Bachelard, the house image acts as a representation of a "topography of our intimate being." (Bachelard and Jolas 1994 p.xxxvi). If I broaden this analysis to include not only a house, but also an entire urban or natural space, we will find that our understanding of the world is often informed by a similar reasoning. When a person plans an evening walk, they might situate it in a network of more or less beautiful places of their immediate surroundings. Sometimes, one wants to be alone and chooses to go for a walk in a less attractive environment, perhaps an industrial environment — but this too is an aesthetic choice. Finally, when people travel to picturesque European city-centres, many of us are used to more or less closing our eyes when passing through the endless suburbs of metropolitan areas. An important conclusion is that beauty or ugliness changes the nature of our practical involvement in the world.

The example of Venice illustrates how aesthetic space can strongly influence other spaces, such as urban spaces or political spaces. On one hand, the constitution of Venice as an urban aesthetic place par excellence made it a target for millions of visitors from all around the world. On the other hand, the city has become quite expensive and thus unreachable for many people. In this sense, beauty can bring things closer to people, while also bringing them farther from people. This is why one could say that aesthetic categories alter the character of separation between humans and their environments. Joseph Brodsky observes this in the following way:

“The one thing the locals never do is ride gondolas. To begin with, a gondola ride is pricey. Only foreign tourists, and well-off ones at that, can afford it. (...) The sight of these decrepit Romeos and their rickety Juliets is invariably sad and embarrassing, not to say ghastly. For the young, i.e., for those who this sort of thing would be appropriate, a gondola is as far out of reach as a five-star hotel. Economy, of course, reflects demography; yet that is doubly sad, because beauty, instead of promising the world, gets reduced to being its reward” (1993).

The aesthetic dimension has influenced both the revitalization of a deteriorated old city and the prevention of almost any new constructions due to the protection of Venice and its lagoon by the UNESCO World Heritage Organization. This is an example of how the aesthetic dimension gives “immanent” power to urban actors, allowing them to use it as an argument to influence society’s actions in the ethical realm or the legal realm. Indeed, in Venice this has led to another interesting phenomenon: One of the greatest cities of the medieval world, characterized by diverse styles and rich historical stratification (that is, it left strong testimonies of the specific restructuring of social relations and various lifestyles of its previous residents), has “organically fused into a coherent unit”, as is stated in the brief synthesis by UNESCO (2016).

How is it that today people perceive the variety of styles in Venice as a coherent unit? So far I have tried to shed some light on the very conditions that allow individuals to engage in the aesthetic experience. However, phenomenology remains relatively silent on the question of why people get why people get involved in the imaginative experience in one specific way rather than another. As Martina Löw observes, in phenomenology, space is “described as being already having been constituted” simply because the condition of constitution cannot be analyzed by introspective phenomenological observation. As a consequence, many of the studies remain unhistorical (2016, 11). Thus, in order to answer this question, I need to turn to the modern condition and incredible set of circumstances that emerged with the rise of big modern cities. In other words, I need to shift the focus from the aesthetic experience to the aesthetic object itself, and investigate how urban and natural environments condition people’s aesthetic understanding of the world. Since place is always in a state of becoming, as the result of historically-contingent processes and social practices (Pred 1984), the question to ask is: By what social processes is an aesthetic place produced? I will terminate my study by investigating how aesthetic judgments evolve and develop, and to what extent the inhabited environment plays a role in this process.

6 The Aesthetic Dimension of the Urban Environment

“L’espace d’aujourd’hui, c’est déjà en grande partie, le résultat des actions de nos concitoyens d’hier. L’espace de demain, ce sera, pour l’essentiel, l’action de nos contemporains, construite et engagée aujourd’hui.”

Jacques Lévy

In what style should contemporary societies build? One way of approaching this problem is to try to detect the spirit of the age, and then to act according to the dominant set of ideals and norms that characterize it. Indeed, as Hegel writes, “no man can overlap its own time, for the spirit of his time [der Geist seiner Zeit] is also his spirit” (1993, 262). However, one need only make a short visit to almost any contemporary cities to find out that the task of detecting “the spirit of the age” is rather tricky. I would say - rather useful. The coexistence of different styles of architecture, the rapid changes that affect the urban landscape, the growing individualization of the components of contemporary urban society, but also the increasing speed with which societies make use of their existing spaces are in complete opposition to the idea of a common denominator that could capture the essence of the intellectual and cultural environment of an age. So instead of approaching this issue solely from a historical perspective, I suggest that it should be approached in terms of urbanity — the concept that allows a transcultural and multidimensional reading of society and its various levels. The question to ask is rather: What style corresponds to what urbanity?

Focusing only on the visible actualised phenomena of an urban environment hides the fact that the world is much richer and much more complex than it appears to be ‘on the surface’. In the previous chapter, I argued that speaking of the aesthetics of the city requires understanding of a particular imaginative capacities of urban actors which allow them to surpass the actual material world. Aesthetic categories appear as a constant reminder of the power of that which does not appear visibly — that is, the virtual. In this chapter, I will be exploring how both the different urban environments and the individuals that inhabit them contribute to the production of aesthetic space. Since the

aesthetic space always emerges as a labyrinth of various constellations of meanings, which “we must accept never to know the totality and the closure” of, as Didi-Habermas argues (2005, 18), I will investigate how do categories such as the image, the virtual, and the aesthetic relate to the production of urban space?

Aesthetic Sensibilities in Switzerland

For more than 200 years, Switzerland has been known for the beauty of its landscapes. The tourist industry, with a contribution of nearly 2 billion Swiss francs, strongly reaps the benefits of Switzerland's aesthetic dimension. This is the case for the tourist industry, but not only. Mountains, lakes, medieval towns and villages are present everywhere, from newspapers and calendars to picture books and small packages of coffee milk. Yet, Switzerland is a highly urbanized and industrialized country. Its characteristic feature is an urban structure comprised of large numbers of small and medium-sized towns, and five relatively large urban centers (the largest Swiss city is Zürich, which has about 396,000 inhabitants). Here you can find not only picturesque landscapes but almost all the landscape themes that are present in other European countries. This is partly a result of the heterogeneous topographical qualities of the Swiss territory, and partly a result of the territories' strong fragmentation (Schwick 2007). A researcher therefore is presented with unique opportunities to study the various gradients of urbanity, as isolated by Lévy,⁴⁰ together with their aesthetic impact.

According to the Swiss Federal Statistics Office, nearly 20 per cent of Swiss residents today live neither in a rural area, nor in a city, but rather, in an agglomeration with mostly detached houses. This low-density urban type occupies more land surface than central communes, which accommodate almost 60% of the Swiss population (Kohler 2014). A 2003 study on Swiss spatial practices showed that there is a cultural and political polarization between the residents of suburban or peri-urban agglomerations, and the residents of larger centers — and especially, of the inner cities (Hermann and Leuthold 2003). This polarization does not coincide with socioeconomic boundaries, but rather reflects opposed lifestyles, which differ in the way everyday life is organized and practiced. The two lifestyles, one practiced in the dense and diverse city and the other in areas with a lower degree of urbanity, cannot be understood solely on their own terms. If as researchers, we want to understand what attracts residents to low-density environments, even at the cost of long daily car commutes, we cannot base our analysis on economic factors alone (see Fortin and Després 2009).

Anyone interested in the evolution of the Swiss urban space will notice that different urban actors assign great importance to aesthetic questions. Thus, my aim is to approach the choice of residential environment (which is always a lifestyle choice) from an

aesthetic perspective. Indeed, aesthetic sensibilities in Switzerland have developed according to particular spatial, social and historical conditions in which the city played a pivotal role.

The Beginnings of Spatial Planning in Switzerland: The Legacy of the Romantics and the Modernists

Recognized already in the eighteenth century as a movement of radical transformation, modernity paved the way to the autonomy of the individual and the democratization of societies. Right from the start, modernist thinkers unilaterally insisted on economic and political individualism (as a promise of liberation from various “conditions”), which, in turn, could only be achieved by breaking free from certain traditional values. However, many authors over the years have noticed that the modern movement has always been accompanied by a counter-movement, which has acted as a sort of protective response to the disruptive effects of modernity. Just as Romanticism was a rejection of neo-classical ideals, the “rediscovery” of an old picturesque town at the end of 19th century was likewise a reaction to the effects of modernity. Françoise Choay argues that modern processes eventually led to two different models of urban planning: the cultural model and the progressive model (Choay 1994). The innovation of modernity (i.e., the progressive model) was its commitment to derive beauty directly from function while breaking with tradition. It is no coincidence that simultaneous to the emergence of modernity, a “new” sensibility appeared — the cultural model — which was anchored in the recognition of historical heritage and the preservation of landscapes threatened by novel constructions. The two parallel and interconnected processes reinforced the two aesthetic ideals — the ideal of the city and the ideal of rurality. A detailed analysis of Swiss literature (Gsteiger et al. 1994) shows that the city has always been represented in opposition to the countryside. When the two were compared, the city usually came behind. The only exception might be the foreign metropolises who managed to elicit rather positive aesthetic emotions (Gsteiger et al. 1994, 136).

In the final chapter of “La Suisse Urbaine” (1994), François Walter points out a strong connection between the characteristics of Switzerland’s spatial planning practices and its anti-urban ideologies. Walter argues that this ideology was “une réaction culturaliste à base esthétique” (1994, 423). However, it is important to remember that before 1900, the urbanism of Paris and Vienna had an important influence on the way Swiss cities were imagined. Several cities modestly drew inspiration from the two cities (and particularly from Paris) to make plans for expansion: This was the case, for example, of

⁴⁰ E.g. hyper center, center, suburb, peri-urban, hypo-urban, infra-urban, tourist station.

the plan Dufour for Geneva (1854), the extension of Basel (1850s), the Ringstrasse in Zurich and Pichard's circle with the Grand Pont in Lausanne (1836) (Walter, 1994, p. 394). The beginning of twentieth century marked a turning point in this practice, through the rediscovery of the old picturesque town. The origin of this movement can be traced back to the 18th century. Under the influence of Romantic literature, first from England and then from Switzerland, many started rejecting neo-classical ideals, which directly influenced a shift in the societal perception of the Alps. Indeed, before the 18th century, the Alps were perceived as inhospitable and were aesthetically dismissed (Senici, 2005, p. 23). The cultural construction of the Alps emerged with the writings of the Romantics who "celebrated wild landscapes, (...) empty deserts, impenetrable forests, frozen ice wastes and, in particular, rugged mountains. (...) Orderliness and regularity were out; untamed wildness was in" (Beattie, 2006, p. 125). The works of the scientist Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, the Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, the poet Albrecht de Haller and the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a particularly profound influence on Western attitudes towards the countryside and mountain landscapes.

Thus, the revalorization of an old picturesque town at the end of 19th century was likewise a reaction to a modern metropolis that threatened the established collective values and national identity. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Switzerland, a movement that was first initiated in the private sphere began to emerge: its purpose was to protect historical heritage and preserve Swiss landscapes. In 1900, Marguerite Burnat-Provins, a French painter and poet who lived in Vevey, founded the "Ligue pour la beauté", which inspired other patriotic organizations such as the "Ligue pour la conservation de la Suisse pittoresque" (futur "Heimatschutz", today "Patrimoine suisse") (1905), the "Ligue pour la protection de la nature" (1909), and the "Alpine museum" (1905). Using a highly emotional tone, she writes about her deepest concerns for Switzerland's natural heritage and built heritage in the article entitled "Les cancers". It was published in 1905 on the front page of the newspaper "Gazette de Lausanne":

"Mais les hommes ne sont pas les seules victimes de ce mal purulent ; les pays, eux non plus, n'échappent pas au cancer, à cette différence près qu'aucun génie ne peut les guérir de leurs ulcères monumentaux. (...) Pourquoi cette insulte aux beautés éternelles de la montagne? Pourquoi ce soufflet à une nature si noble, dont le rôle exclusive semblait être de charmer? Que la Suisse réponde. (...) Sur les terrains, impitoyablement nivelés, s'élèvent, en grappes pustuleuses, des bâtiments informes, l'horreur s'étend ou la grâce régnait. (...) Pauvre nature, étiquetée, prostituée !" (17 March 1905).

Here Burnat-Provins is expressing a view labeled as “positive aesthetics” (Carlson 2005, 75), expressed in the idea that the natural environment, insofar as it is unaffected by man, has only positive aesthetic qualities and values. At the end of her article Burnat-Provins calls for action:

“Ceux qui ne comprennent pas doivent être avisés, et retenus dans leur coupable irréflexion. Empêcher le mal, tuer le microbe, ou du moins l'affaiblir, n'est pas une atteinte à la liberté, c'est faire œuvre de haute sagesse et de patriotisme éclairé. (...) la cause de la beauté qui est chez nous une cause nationale.” (Gazette de Lausanne, 17 March 1905)

It was a celebration of traditional aesthetics, which rapidly became an instrument for the critique of industrial society – which was seen as responsible for the country’s “crisis of identity” and “degeneration” (*dégénérescence*) (Le Dinh 1992). Many artists and authors supported this new anti-modern ideology — among others, Charles Melley, George de Montenach, and Guillaume Fatio. In the book “Ouvrons les yeux! Voyage esthétique à travers la Suisse”, Fatio calls for action against “la laideur et la banalité de toutes les bâtisses modernes”. The book begins with a preface by Eugène Burnand, a Swiss painter and the president of “La nouvelle Société helvétique”, who writes:

“Notre pays s'enlaidit avec une rapidité stupéfiante. L'affreuse ‘bâtisse’ envahit la campagne comme un champignon vénéneux. Et il y a des gens qui trouvent cela beau et qui s'enorgueillissent ! – Vous leur démontrez, noir sur blanc, que cela est affreux... vous le démontrez par comparaison en évoquant, en un ensemble infiniment attrayant, parfait émouvant, les types caractéristiques de notre architecture nationale, telle qu'elle était issue de nos mœurs, de nos conditions climatériques, de nos besoins, de notre âme elle-même” (1904, 7).

Fatio’s book summarized the rising aesthetic sensibility towards rural picturesqueness at the time, which was being increasingly used in the construction of a new architectural and urban paradigm that rejected new architectural models. This ideology was formally articulated in 1896 during the National Exhibition in Geneva. At the event, a village was built over a surface of 23,191 square meters and was to be inhabited by 353 villagers. It contained a 40-meter tall mountain with an artificial waterfall, 56 houses, a church, 3 farms and 18 alpine chalets. For Bernard Crettaz, this 1:1 model of The Swiss village was used as the catalyzer for numerous symbolic elements, with the aim of presenting the nation as a coherent entity (1987). The village was a pure construction, yet it provided

an architectural archetype to be dispersed throughout the country (Salomon Cavin, 2005, p. 58). The city, or more precisely the big city, had no importance in the construction of a national identity. From the aesthetic point of view, the city lacked the stylistic uniformity on which such an identity could be constructed. This had a strong impact on the politics of spatial planning practices. François Walter affirmed that throughout the 1930s to the 1950s, the rural milieu affirmed itself as the principal protagonist in spatial planning — specifically, by protecting the land that urbanization endangered (1994, 1985). Often, it was not the city per se that brought about negative images, but rather the changes and metamorphoses of the inhabited environment that grew rapidly.

In the collection of short essays entitled “Lausanne. Une ville qui a mal tourné” (Jaloux et al. 1945), which was presented under the umbrella of the “Mouvement pour la défense de Lausanne”, several authors expressed their worries about the city’s present and future. Aesthetic considerations appear to take on a central role in each of the five texts. Among others, F.C. Ramuz openly attacks new kinds of architecture that do not correspond to the existing character of the city. He writes of an architecture that no longer corresponds to the society that produced it. He concludes that if cities have been going in the wrong direction, it is because society as a whole, which “does not believe in anything, does not think of anything, does not feel anything”⁴¹ has been going in the wrong direction:

“Or, si l’exemple de l’ordre impose l’ordre, l’exemple du désordre conseille le désordre. Il n’a eu qu’à partir du centre où il trouvait tous les encouragements et à gagner de là vers la périphérie. Le désordre et tous les désordres, pas seulement le désordre architectural et esthétique, qui n’est d’ailleurs que le signe du désordre intérieur ; mais le désordre dans les habitudes et dans les goûts, et le désordre dans les comptes (...) — et je n’insiste pas sur le spectacle d’une banlieue hétéroclite qui s’est répandue peu à peu dans tout le pays, des Alpes au Jura ; qui n’est pas seulement laide, mais morne (car il y a des laideurs vivantes), morne et morte, morne et propre, et parfaitement satisfaite d’elle-même au milieu de la pire incohérence qui soit.” (Jaloux et al. 1945, 35-6).

Originally, the text of Ramuz was published in the local newspaper *Aujourd’hui* on 18 December 1930, as a reaction to the construction of the Bel-Air tower in the center of Lausanne. The tower epitomized the city breaking away from its traditional structure — which was considered organic and coherent — and in breaking from this tradition, the

⁴¹ In French: “ne crois à rien, ne pense rien, ne sent rien” (Jaloux et al. 1945, 38).

city was seen as rapidly disintegrating. The members of Swiss patriotic organizations were not the only ones to condemn the diversification and densification of the urban tissue. An equally passionate attack came from the protagonists of the twentieth-century Modern movement itself. The vitality, diversity and vibrancy of the emerging industrial city came to symbolize only disorder, while the street itself was seen as an archaic form that the Modern movement was trying to leave behind. Since the increasingly fragmented and increasingly growing modern city could no longer be grasped in a single view, nor be understood as an organic unity, the main protagonists of modernist urban planning (Le Corbusier, Hilberseimer, and others) tried to achieve a new organicity through a kind of *ex nihilo* urban planning that sought to erase the city's chaotic kaleidoscope. It is true that the traditional, like the industrial city, faced the enormous troubles in terms of living conditions of the workers, but nothing implied that the only way to achieve Light, Air and Sun was to brutally ignore the existing urban and social structure at the time.

In an attempt to actualize their utopian ideas, a new aesthetic sensibility emerged from the uncritical romance of machines, but it was primarily developed, as André Corboz put it, against or alongside the city (cited in Jacobs 2002, 17). In the Charter of Athens (1933, CIAM), no aesthetic considerations were made except in the section on historic heritage (point 70) which stated that past historic styles should not be tolerated (Le Corbusier 1973). Aesthetics was discussed in terms of utilitarian considerations, and aesthetic experience was considered as nothing more than an experience of actual function — as if humans were creatures without a past or future, desperately absorbed by the present.

Switzerland's urban planners did indeed embrace the modernist aspiration for functionally-devised environments, but they considered it as a backdrop for picturesque nature. Armin Meili, a Zurich architect, is one of the central figures in this process. As the director of the National Exhibition in 1939 and later a director of "L'association Suisse pour le plan d'aménagement national" (ASPAN), he had a major influence on spatial planning in Switzerland. In his speech in 1942 entitled "Bases sociales et éthiques de l'aménagement du territoire national", he presents his ideas for Swiss society:

"Plus l'architecture est colossale, plus l'homme est petit. Partout où trop d'hommes vivent ensemble, on note des grèves, du chômage, avec la maladie, la famine et le paupérisme. Plus un espace supporte une population dense, plus son appareil économique est fragile. (...) Plus dense la population, moins elle est près de la terre. (...) Une conception fautive nous conduira à une émigration accrue, et à la course vers la grande ville.

De nos jours l'existence indépendante devient rare, et tend à plonger dans la masse. Des hommes méritants tombent dans l'anonymat. La responsabilité personnelle et son active transposition sur le plan politique disparaissent. On lui substitue le désintéressement collectif. Le voisinage entre familles, le ciment de nos communautés, se perd. (...) Nous devons avoir le courage de tracer, pour les cinquante ans qui viennent, le plan de notre pays tel que nous le voudrions. (...) Nous ne voulons pas d'amas de pierre, de fer et de béton. Les villes doivent avoir vue sur la nature, une ville doit respirer. (...) Notre beau pays est prédestiné à la création d'une métropole décentralisée, se déroulant comme un collier de perles du Bodan au Léman”.

First, one can see how the ethical and social bases he is trying to construct for Swiss society have a clearly expressed aesthetic component. Indeed, Meili develops arguments against the rise of the big city, which he sees as a tower of Babel constructed with stone, iron and concrete. Second, he advocates for an urban environment with a lower degree of urbanity. Thus, he defends the preservation of town structures constructed before the 20th century, which are characterized by strong compactness; At the same time, for new zones of urbanization, he advocates moving towards the model of the decentralized metropolis. Meili's discourse underlines some very important ideas regarding the way the city would be imagined and constructed during the following decades in Switzerland.⁴² “Nearly all the regional proposals from that period [after WWII] suggested an ‘orderly’ reduction of the concentration of urban development and encouraging decentralized, regional centers intended to reduce the pressures of development in the large cities. (...) The notion that there was something ‘un-Swiss’ about a large city (...) became the dominant axiom of Helvetic planning” (Diener, et al. 2005, p.186). The highway network, approved in a federal referendum in 1958 reinforced anti-urban tendencies that would eventually yield to urban sprawl. Thus, Swiss urban practices have been characterized by the following two parallel processes: the preservation of traditional picturesque towns and a preference for a low-density dispersed urban tissue.

⁴² From the 1950s onwards, due to tendencies to decentralize the Swiss territory, the spatial planning discourse became so abstract and functional that the concepts of ‘city’ and ‘urbanism’ were superseded by the concept of ‘communes’ categorized by their size and function. The article on spatial planning was incorporated into the Federal Constitution in 1969, which marked the progressive movement of the auto-regulatory property market toward the planning tendencies (Walter 1994, 13). Although the responsibility for spatial planning legislation was transferred to the Confederation, practical planning implementation remained essentially a matter for cantons, which in turn often delegated a number of tasks to communal local authorities. Spatial planning thus became more of a tool for the regulation of urban growth than a way of thinking about territory at the metropolitan level.

As is the case in several other European countries, the aesthetic and ethical ideals of Swiss urban planners were strongly influenced by the English paradigm of the Garden-City. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it seems that there was a consensus around this question between the different urban actors in Switzerland. As Walter noticed, this model found favor with utopians and progressivists, but also with the socialists and right-wing liberals. It united the hygienists, urbanists and local authorities and had a very important influence between 1910 and 1930 (1994, p. 412). The Garden-City paradigm in a strange way united two ideals: the nineteenth century utopians' dream of the self-sustaining community, and the aspirations of the English bourgeoisie for a residence in a natural environment away from the city. At the center of this idea was again a paradoxical sentiment of both nostalgia for the pre-industrial age and a desire for growth and progress (see Fishman 1987).

The examples given here are not to be understood as simply an overview of spatial practices in Switzerland. Rather my aim is to point out two things: First, that in the processes that structure the urban environment, both "small" and "big" actors play equally important roles; And second, that the aesthetic dimension always guides and influences the processes of decision-making. Beauty has the potential of activating the agency of urban actors and fundamentally influencing the realm of the ethical, i.e., the realm of actual action. In a particular manner, aesthetic judgments reflect humans' attitudes towards stability or towards change which, I believe, is of fundamental importance for those who want to understand the processes that generate the inhabited environment.



Fig. 20 – La condition humaine, René Magritte, 1933 © 2017, ProLitteris, Zurich

Landscape as an Aesthetic Place Oscillating Between Pristine Nature and Pure Artefact

On March 11 2012, Switzerland voted on Franz Weber's initiative "To put a stop to the invasive spread of second homes". Its aim was to prevent the further urbanization of the Alpine region. Although the initiative had a number of very strong opponents,⁴³ it was accepted by 50.6% of the Swiss population. During the campaign, voters were subjected to very powerful pictures of a highly urbanized Matterhorn. Urbanization was presented as a threat to the rural ideal — images and romantic discourses evoking the beauty of the Alps were among the strongest arguments used by activists during the campaign. Thus a new chapter was added to an old disagreement dating back to the time of the popular invention of the Alps in the 18th century. The campaign and debates that followed the vote demonstrated that the majority of arguments could be reduced to two tendencies which were "always presented as being opposed to one another: landscape preservation and self-focused development of the mountain areas (...) one champion[ing] a form of nostalgia for a rural Switzerland to be preserved from increasing urban development; the other speak[ing] of the struggle of peripheral regions to create economic activity" (Petite 2013).

Franz Weber, who grew up near Basel, studied philosophy and literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1965, captivated by the beauty of the Engadine valley, where he was spending his holidays, he initiated a campaign to prevent the construction of a resort in Haute-Engadine. Having succeeded in this endeavor, he then continued his activism in many other regions and became famous for his action to safeguard the terraced vineyards of Lavaux, which today is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (see Petite 2013). Aesthetic concerns were at the origin of his involvement in ecological activism:

"Our children have the right to enjoy the beauty of our mountain landscapes as created by Nature and culture [...] We have to strike a blow

⁴³ "[A]part from the Parliament – the National Council and the Council of the States – which was mostly against the initiative, the federal Council also advised the people of Switzerland to vote "No". Numerous other actors were also opposed to it: the cantons (Grisons and Valais), the Governmental Conference of Alpine Cantons (GCAC), the Association of mountain populations (Groupement pour les populations de montagne) as well as various professional associations and lobbies, such as the Swiss Hotel Association, Gastrosuisse, Economiesuisse and the Swiss Employers' Association. The only groups in favour of the initiative were the Ecologist and Socialist parties along with some environmental defence associations, such as the WWF and Pro Natura" (Petite 2013).

against the spread of second homes and save our Swiss homeland”
(Foundation Weber et Helvetia Nostra, 2012, p.3, translation Petite).

Philippe Roch was another prominent activist who was particularly active in the media. His discourses continually point out the importance of protecting beautiful landscapes:

“Economic and demographic pressures demand greater discipline in the field of building, planning and development if we are to preserve the magnificent garden that Nature has endowed us with. To vote in favour of the initiative *To Put an End to the Unbridled Construction of Second Homes* is an act of love for our beautiful country” (translation Petite, 2013).

Weber's romantic landscape ideology is resolutely against the idea of urban development in the mountain areas. He argues that landscapes are a thousand times more important than the benefits to be gained by a handful of people (Swiss Review, 2014, p.17). At what point does a landscape meet the criteria of beautiful? He reveals only that he is “completely honest and impartial”, “rely on gut instinct” and that he prefers “manure to concrete” (Swiss Review, 2014, p.16-17). For him, urban sprawl, which indeed is a widely recognized problem in Switzerland (ARE, 2005), is equated with the city itself:

“We have launched our campaign in part to save tourism. We don't want a city stretching from Lake Constance to Lake Geneva. We don't want cities in mountain areas” (Résidences secondaires: le grand débat de Forum, Forum, RTS, 16 february 2012, translation Petite, 2013).

Here one should not mistake ecological awareness with the protection of picturesque landscapes. The western sensibility towards landscapes emerged around the nineteenth-century. At that time, the theory of the picturesque provided an aesthetic ideal, which, in turn, led to a boost in Alpine tourism and the appreciation of foreign landscapes. “The term picturesque literally means ‘picture-like’ and the theory of the picturesque advocates an aesthetic appreciation in which the natural world is experienced as if divided into art-like scenes, which ideally resemble works of art, as in landscape painting, in both subject matter and composition” (Carlson 2015). The construction of the concept of landscape was a double process, “first of separating and framing distinct elements from within the continuous flow and unbroken unity of nature, and then of creatively reconfiguring these parts within a new totality endowed with figural, abstract and, above all, emotional significance” (Kemple, n.d., p.8 quoting Simmel). The landscape becomes then “a figment of the imagination, a product of the viewer's own cultural, social and psychological constitution” (Lothian 1999, 178).

In “The Philosophy of Landscape”, George Simmel draws attention to the common mistake of claiming that an actual “feeling for nature” emerged only in modernity: “Rather, it is the religions of more primitive epochs that seem to me to reveal a particularly deep feeling for ‘nature’. It is only the sensibility for that particular formation, a ‘landscape’, that emerged quite late; and that is because this creation necessitated a tearing away from that unitary feeling of the whole of nature. (...) nor Antiquity, nor the Middle Ages, nor the early Renaissance had any awareness of landscape” (Bleicher and Simmel, 2007, p. 23). We observe an interesting detour here. A detachment of the “subject” from the “organic whole” (announced with the Cartesian split) opened the path to the western conception of the landscape, while at the same time this conception was used as a tool to reclaim lost unity.

For Michaël Jakob, the experience of landscape is first of all, an experience of ourselves as humans. The subject is not only an observer but a constitutive element of the landscape (Jakob 2008, 31-2). For a landscape to emerge, three elements must be present: nature, a subject, and a certain relation between the two (2008, 34). In other words, a certain space must be produced in order for a landscape to be able to emerge as such. This space is precisely the aesthetic space. Indeed, a landscape is an aesthetic place par excellence.

“Pour moi ce qui est beau, c’est la nature. Vraiment ce que personne n’a touché, ce qui est vivant de base. Donc je vais faire énormément de balades dans la nature. (...) Chez moi dans mon salon par exemple, on n’a peint la mer sur les murs, on a fait un paysage. Enfin, on est revenus à la nature !” - Emilia, 57, ville (bord de ville)

Now the question is: What does an experience of landscape teach us? If in the concept of landscape there is a certain idea of nature, one must not forget that this conception does not stand isolated from a general outlook on the world. Simmel already describes in 1908 that nature and culture are “only two different ways of looking at the same thing” (Simmel 1997). Indeed, there are as many conceptions of nature as there are societal models (fr. *modèles de société*) (Lévy and Lussault 2013, 716), and this holds true for the landscape as well.

“Des paysages que je trouve laids, par exemple, c’est des paysages finalement où la vie est tellement, tellement canalisée et oui, non c’est tellement les trucs... que des champs de blés, tirés au cordon, avec quarante tonnes d’insecticide et d’herbicide partout, et on voit juste, même s’il y a vaguement encore quelque chose qui vit, finalement ce qui peut susciter de l’émerveillement ailleurs, ben là il n’y a plus grand chose pour en susciter quoi.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

“[Photo 4] Ces immeubles sont trop hauts. Rasez-les qu'on voit le Jura ! Mais en même temps, est ce qu'il faut que tout soit uniforme ? Non, c'est une époque qui fait pas envie, ça.” - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

“Je suis lausannoise. (...) Ce qui est beau, c'est quand vous êtes dans le bas de Lausanne et que vous avez une vue au nord sur tout Lausanne. Ça c'est magnifique. Une belle vue sur la ville, une vue soit de bas en haut, soit de haut en bas mais quelque chose où on n'a pas le... où on a du dégagement. Voilà. Par contre, je ne suis pas du tout sensible aux charmes de la ferme isolée au milieu de la campagne. (...) Ça m'angoisse. Trop de vide tue le vide.” - Sabrina, 35, ville (ville)

Other than this essential nature-society couple, there is another equally important pair of notions that broadens the understanding of human beings' place in the world. In the discourse on landscape, one will always find people debating the natural-artificial dichotomy, where the “artificial” is the antonym of the “natural”.⁴⁴

“Là il n'y a plus de nature donc non. Non clairement pas. (...) Trop construit. La main de l'homme est partout. Il n'y a plus rien de sauvage.” - Walter, 60, périurbain (campagne)

“Pour moi il faut déjà qu'il y a des espaces verts. Si c'est bétonné partout je vais pas trouver beau même si l'architecture sera belle. Même si je vais trouver l'architecture belle, s'il n'y a pas des espaces verts je ne pourrais pas y vivre. Pour que ça soit beau, il faut un peu de nature pour moi.” - Patrick, 34, village (village)

“[Photo 9] Ça c'est l'habitat d'aujourd'hui bien serré, enfin, non il y a pire maintenant. Voilà. Deux trois arbres, une caisse, les jeux, général quoi, je ne sais pas ce que c'est comme magasin. Bien voilà, ça c'est, il y a personne dessus mais ça montre bien un monde surpeuplé. Où tout est serré, tout est fermé. Il y a une espèce de cour intérieure, c'est bien joli mais non. Ça n'évoque pas. Vous voyez les arbres, ils les ont mis, ils les ont surélevés comme dans des caisses alors, c'est comme si on mettait des arbres en caisse donc, la nature elle n'est pas là. Ce n'est pas, voilà... On est dans du béton. Béton dessous, béton de côté. Il n'y a pas encore de béton dessus, ça va.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

In this sense, many inhabitants express judgments that mirror Marguerite Burnat-Provins's aesthetic positivism from the 1900s. This is by no means unique to Switzerland. As Allen Carlson argues, the roots of this view may be traced back to eighteenth-century Romantic's ideas, at the very least, where the primacy of natural beauty was considered as the norm for the arts. In the nineteenth century, this became a

⁴⁴ In general terms, the artificial is related to anything that is made or transformed by humans.

common idea within the social circles of landscape artists and others interested in the beauty of nature. For example, in 1957, John Ruskin writes: “There is this great peculiarity about sky subject, as distinguished from earth subject — that the clouds, not being much liable to man’s interference, are always beautifully arranged. You cannot be sure of this in any other features of landscape.” (Ruskin 2012, 128-9) This view has persisted throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, in the writings and activities of authors such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, renowned as some of the greatest influencers on the preservation of the wilderness. Their ideas continue to strongly resonate today through the various forms of environmental protection, but also in our day-to-day activities. As Emma Marris, a science journalist observes, “For many conservationists, restoration to a pre-human or a pre-European baseline is seen as healing a wounded or sick nature. For others, it is an ethical duty. We broke it; therefore we must fix it.” As she notes, wild nature for Muir was a necessity for the “tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people” suffering from “the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury.” (Marris 2011) Again, one can see that a certain idea of nature is always developed in relation to a certain vision of society.

David Lowenthal, a geographer and member of the environmental conservation movement, writes about how History and Nature alter the present by imposing on inhabitants a dream-like image of American scenery. “By contrast with the idealised past, the present workday environment is considered not worth looking at. Nature is likewise thought preferable to artifice. The favoured landscapes are wild; landscapes altered or disturbed or built on by man are considered beneath attention or beyond repair. Adoration of the wilderness, like idealisation of the past, focuses attention on the remote and the special to the neglect of the nearby and the familiar. Conservationist organisations contrast sordid scenes dominated by man with lovely landscapes devoid of human activity — telegraph poles versus trees, a mass of people versus a mass of sand. The implication is clear: man is dreadful, nature is sublime” (Lowenthal 1968).

Aarne Kinnunen (see Carlson 2005, 75) sharply distinguished the aesthetics of nature from the aesthetics of art, the former being positive and the latter negative. The basic assumption for positive aesthetics comes from the unquestionable idea that all virgin nature is beautiful and that negative criticism only comes into play when man is involved. This attribution of positive aesthetic qualities to anything that is natural is illustrated by a number of our participants:

“Je pense que la nature pure, peu touché par des humains est en général assez joli.”
- Thomas, 25, ville (campagne)

“On a beaucoup voyagé, on a été dans plein d'endroits différents, aussi bien au Mexique, dans le Cénodo ou dans la forêt ou en Guadeloupe ou n'importe où, je n'ai jamais trouvé un endroit nature qui soit laid. Alors là, ben voilà, on peut avoir des trucs complètement inesthétiques, foisonnants, un peu fous, mais je trouve que ça va, enfin que c'est tellement... Non, la nature est magnifique. Magnifique oui.”

- Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

“C'est clair qu'on est très impressionné quand on voit des paysages de désolation après des feux de forêt, après des choses comme ça, mais est-ce que c'est laid? Non, c'est impressionnant. C'est inhabituel, mais est-ce que la nature est laide? Il y a des animaux qui sont terribles, qui font peut-être, surgir un peu d'angoisse, mais est-ce que c'est laid? Moi, non, je ne vais pas appeler ça laid, non.” - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

“- Est-ce que vous pensez que la nature pure peut être laide?”

- La nature pure? Moi je dirais non. Si, elle n'a pas été touchée, non. Si elle est pure, elle n'a pas été touchée par l'homme. Moi je pense que tout ce qui est naturel, moi je dirais que c'est beau. Disons, je ne pense pas maintenant, à quoi je pourrais penser maintenant, qui serait laid dans la nature? Non je ne vois pas.

- Donc, la laideur vient plutôt avec l'homme?

- Ah, oui. Qu'est-ce qui peut être laid dans la nature? Non. Je ne saurais pas à quoi penser.” - Martha, 65, ville (campagne)

“- Est-ce que vous pensez que la nature pure peut être laide?”

- Non, donc, la nature extérieure, pas la nature des gens, pas la nature de la nature. Non, je ne pense pas. Je pense qu'elle peut être très forte, très dure. Par exemple je n'aime pas trop les Alpes. Parce que c'est une roche qui est pour moi pointue, agressive, cassante. J'aime beaucoup plus la rondeur du Jura. Mais on dirait de ces Alpes, si on utilise un terme anglais, on dirait: «oh! c'est dramatic!», donc ce n'est pas laid. C'est vraiment que ça suggère une atmosphère dure, un volcan, ce qui reste d'un volcan, des terres comme dans Lanzarote, et tout ça, c'est tout noir, mais c'est impressionnant!” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

“Je ne pense pas que la nature, ça peut pas être laid. Nous on la rend laide, mais la nature en général n'est pas laide.” - Sara, 48, ville (campagne)

“Je choisirai les endroits qui sont plutôt jolis à des endroits qui sont culturellement hyper intéressants. Je préférerais les paysages aux villes, parce que personnellement je trouve que la nature est plus belle que la construction.” - Christine, 40, périurbain (banlieue)

Allen Carlson offers three possible justifications for positive aesthetics, and at the same time, provides us with arguments to the contrary. I will present a summary of his position, because it sheds light on some important theories that continue to influence many writers and scholars today. First, he refers to theories, upheld by authors such as Robert Elliot or Harold Osborne, that consider the experience of pristine nature as not being genuinely aesthetic. According to this view, nature can only be evaluated without judgment, whereas artifacts, as intentional objects shaped and designed by their authors, can be submitted to our judgments and aesthetic criticism. The essential problem of this view is that it suggests that nature is a sort of extra-social element and simply ignores the fact that the concept of nature itself is a social construct (see Rolston 1997). The same criticism can be addressed to the second group of authors, such as Burke and Kant, who held that the natural world is in a way outside of our control, since no artist creates it. According to this viewpoint, the appreciation of nature, which is potentially seen as a source of fear and death, dissolves into the positive aesthetic category of the sublime that designates the “amazement, wonder, or awe in the face of nature’s threatening otherness” (Carlson 2005, 79). The major error is that the theory of sublime suggests that “because the natural world is alien in the sense of not being of our making, it is therefore beyond our understanding”. Although the natural world, as Carlson writes, is not an artifact, this does not mean we cannot understand it. “It only means that we cannot come to understand it as we can understand an artifact, that is, in virtue of creating it” (Carlson 2005, 79). Even what Carlson writes might not always be true, for a person’s understanding of nature can be informed by works of art. Such is the case with the notion of landscape, whose emergence happens to be a paradoxical process since a landscape was, in a sense, an artistic representation before it became a daily reality. As Jakob observes, a landscape is a copy that preceded the original (Jakob 2008, 32). The third group of authors are advocates for the idea that pure nature is always beautiful and rely on the well-known “theist view that the natural world is designed, created, and maintained by an all-knowing and all-powerful God” (Carlson 2005, 81). It is thus pointless to discuss its beauty since, being of divine origin, it is a perfect world. This position, as Carlson puts it, “suggests that the theist has a unique kind of aesthetic appreciation of nature”, which, in turn, “is counterintuitive in light of both the theist position on the problem of evil and the historical point of view of Christian theism” (Carlson 2005, 84). This is why, in order to find a justification for positive aesthetics, as researchers we must look to what seems to be the reality that this view opposes itself against, i.e., the world of humans and societies that they make (or destroy) with their acts and intentions. If I closely analyze the discourse of inhabitants who participated in my study, one can see that the artificial is often used to indicate some negative, false or deceptive aspect of a given societal situation:

“- Peut-être aussi la beauté, on pourrait lui dire qu'elle serait peut-être plus naturelle, alors que la laideur aurait quelque chose d'artificiel peut-être. (...)

- Qu'est-ce que tu entends par l'artificiel ?

- Dans le sens d'un artifice qui a été comme, je ne sais pas moi, du maquillage sur une femme. Du maquillage trop lourd dans ce sens-là par exemple. Quelque chose qui fait pas, qui, où on voit que la main de l'homme est intervenue dans un sens négatif. Alors que le naturel, ça serait par exemple comme pour Rousseau qui dit que tous les hommes sont bons, etc., et naissent beaux, etc. Donc ça serait peut-être cette théorie, l'état naturel, sauvage, d'innocence. C'est peut-être ça lié à la beauté.

- Donc est-ce que tu penses que la nature pure ne peut pas être laide ?

- Non, je pense que très souvent, on la considèrera même comme laide, ou comme... Mais ce que je veux dire dans les définitions ou dans ce que ça évoque, on pourrait peut-être voir l'intervention comme quelque chose de négatif ou disons, l'artificiel comme quelque chose de laid, mais je pense que la nature peut être laide aussi. Il y a aussi l'idée d'un, typiquement, d'un jardin qu'on laisse à l'état sauvage, avec des mauvaises herbes... etc. Peut-être on le verra plus, si on devait le qualifier, on le verra plus comme laid, qu'un jardin qui a été parfaitement entretenu et...

- Dans ce cas-là, est-ce que tu peux me redire ce que tu entends par artificiel ?

- Peut-être... dans artificiel y a aussi la notion de, « qui cherche à tromper » aussi, « qui cherche à cacher », ce qui serait peut-être, comme un artifice, comme un dispositif, comme une astuce ou quelque chose comme ça qui serait peut-être de la tromperie. C'est peut-être aussi ça que je voyais dans l'artificiel. Dans le sens où il y a un agenda de quelqu'un qui va dire, là j'aimerais bien que ça, ça représente ça, donc je vais faire la chose de cette manière-là, comme ça. Artificiellement, on aura l'idée d'une représentation qui est celle que je voulais en fait. C'est ça aussi dans « artificiel ».” - Lucas, 29, ville (ville)

“[Photo 11] Tout a été refait. Mais ça ne fait rien, c'est plaisant et puis les couleurs sont en harmonie. Un petit coin plus intime dans une ville et puis qui n'est pas fait pour les touristes. Ça ne donne pas un côté artificiel. Même si c'est visiblement très récent, c'est fait pour les habitants.” - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

“- [Photo 6] Oui, c'est presque carte postale (rire) ... avec les vignes, beaucoup de vert, les maisons qui ont... oui... ces toits pointus qui, je trouve, s'intègrent bien. C'est peut-être l'image que j'ai de mes grands-parents (rire), mais voilà ! Ça je trouve très, très joli, oui. Oui, on ne voit aucune marque vraiment fortement artificielle, de route ou autre. Pas de grue. C'est plus la nature qui maîtrise le paysage.

- Vous pensez que là... ?

- Alors, bien sûr, les maisons, c'est artificiel.

- Mais les vignes, ce n'est pas artificiel ?

- Si, si, c'est artificiel, bien sûr. Mais... c'est pas (rire)... c'est un autre niveau d'artificialité (rire) ! Puis sur l'esthétique, je pense qu'il y a des éléments artificiels qui sont, oui, qui sont plus positifs que d'autres." - Martin, 22, ville (ville)

"[Photo 1] Je regarde ce que je trouve laid parce que pour l'instant y a pas grand-chose que je trouve moche, parce que ces petites maisons, je les aime bien. J'adore les arches, c'est quelque chose que j'adore. J'adorerais avoir des portes comme ça, après les vignes, bon ben voilà c'est la nature, c'est beau. On sait que quand on est là-haut on voit le lac et puis que c'est magnifique. Ben plus c'est gros, moins je trouve joli en fait. Plus c'est petit, plus je trouve joli. C'est un peu ça." - Christine, 40, périurbain (banlieue)

Christine's last thought sheds light on an interesting phenomenon. A picturesque wine-growing village of St. Saphorin, surrounded by vine terraces created and then continually maintained by humans since at least the eleventh century, is perceived as a natural environment. 'Natural' thus comes close to equating something with being 'authentic'; in other words, it is related to the reproduction of existing, as a sort of possibility of returning to the golden-age (Lévy and Lussault 2013, 106). An authentic environment is always an apparently stable organic environment devoid of inner tensions and contradictions (if such contradictions exist, they are usually dismissed as being artificial). When looking at the photograph of St. Saphorin, Elisabeth and Patrick specifically point out the artificial character of railroads that somehow deteriorate the organic unity of the village and its surrounding environment:

"- [Photo 1] Mais ça c'est superbe! C'est superbe. Ben il y a justement une unité, là, de la partie bâtie avec encore juste l'église, mais c'est absolument fabuleux ! C'est clair que si on voulait faire quelque chose qui serait artificiel, mais impeccable, on effacerait les marques visibles du chemin de fer. Mais ce chemin de fer il est tellement indispensable et puis il apporte lui-même, quand on y passe, une telle vue. Non ces vignobles en terrasses, et puis le grand mur en haut, on ne peut pas, il est pas non, il fait partie du paysage, je pense qu'il est nécessaire pour le soutien. Non c'est un très bel endroit pour moi. Il n'y a pas non plus de constructions qui sont vraiment parasites, là.

- Quand vous dites « parasites », vous pensez à quoi?

- Je pense à des choses qui n'ont pas des raisons historiques comme celle-là et puis qui seraient du mitage du territoire. Sans relation directe avec la culture de la vigne. On connaît très bien le village vigneron qui est très serré." - Elisabeth, périurbain (périurbain)

"[Photo 1] C'est tout ce que j'aime. On est sur le lac, il y a des vignobles, la forêt. Un petit village en bas, le paysage varié, donc en général ça me plaît. Après, il y a des éléments qui sont moins beaux parce qu'il y a une ligne de train avec des pilotes,

même deux, en bas il y a une autre. Avec les murs, ça fait beaucoup de lignes. Dans le même sens, ça dérange un petit peu. Et si on prend plus spécifiquement au niveau de village, des volets, s'ils avaient été tous rouges — plutôt que là, il y a un qui est vert, et puis il y a un bleu, là c'est bordeaux rouge — ça aurait été plus harmonieux.”

- Tu penses que ce qui coupe un peu l'harmonie est la présence des différentes couleurs ?

- Oui. Les couleurs et là, par exemple, il y a énormément de vitres alors qu'ailleurs c'est plutôt des petites fenêtres et puis après il y a deux grosses maisons plus à écart, encore une autre là-bas. Là, c'est tout concentré donc ça fait un peu bizarre aussi. C'est bizarre. On a l'impression que ça n'a rien à faire au milieu. (...) Si on regarde l'église, j'aimerais un toit plus pointu. Le clocher fait un peu bas par rapport à la hauteur de la montagne. Et puis il n'a pas la même pente que le reste de l'église. Ça aurait été plus joli s'il avait la même pente que l'autre. Quand c'est bien pointu, ça fait plus l'église. Là, on dirait qu'il s'est effondré et puis ils ont fait au plus simple, au moins cher, disons, qui est quand même beau. C'est peut-être nouveau. Ce n'est pas ce qu'on voit tous les jours, les toits pointus, un coque dessus.” - Patrick, 34, village (village)

Authentic usually means untouched by modernity. With authenticity comes the question of unity. Indeed, all authentic environments aim at an effect of unity. Categories of unity and disunity are first and foremost aesthetic categories, as first recognized by Schopenhauer (1957 [1883], appendix on architecture). Indeed, he argued that the effect of unity boils down to an effect of style. This is why I will focus my attention on the problem of style, which gained particularly importance with the rise of modernity and the particular societal conditions that emerged with it.

Modernity and the Problem of Style

*“Vreme je s druge strane brda, tamo gde počinje svetski
haos, ili haos apsolutno-otvorenog sveta.”*

Radomir Konstantinović

The deep societal and environmental changes that took place after the rise of big cities in the nineteenth-century were perhaps the fundamental reason why urban questions became the focus of sudden interest. This shift was a reaction to changes happening in the lives and values of communities – changes that were different from anything else humanity had experienced before. In this new experience called ‘modernity’, the experience of space and time, of the self and of others, radically changed. Marshal

Berman argues that we still live in the modern era, which endlessly creates the world anew:

“To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world — and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: It pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, ‘all that is solid melts into air’. People who find themselves in the midst of this maelstrom are apt to feel that they are the first ones, and maybe the only ones, to be going through it; This feeling has engendered numerous nostalgic myths of pre-modern Paradise Lost” (Berman 1988, 15).

Today, like in the nineteenth century’s growing cities, one is faced with the challenge of how to move and live in this ever-changing environment. The principal aim of this thesis is to find in aesthetic categories an entry point into how modern men and women constitute themselves as subjects. The idea is to shed more light, from an aesthetic angle, on how they struggle between individuality and generality, i.e., how they find a way to simultaneously individuate themselves and exist as a part of unifying encompassing context. Simmel argued that each modern individual has two main choices: either to become a unity himself or herself, or to join a unity as a serving partner (Simmel 1991, 70). Using an idealized model, the choice can be seen as one between a society of individuals, or a community of more or less homogenous social order. It would be fair to say that as humans, we all oscillate between these two models of society, which never actually become fully actualized. The category of style can help observe both the individualization of the modern subject and its inclusion in one or several models of society.

Style is always the function of uniformity (Konstantinović 1981, author’s translation). Each and every style is an unfurling of a certain outlook on the world, and thus an insistence on stylistic unity is always an insistence on a certain coherence regarding the way someone inhabits the world. At first sight, style subjugates an individual thing to some general law that also applies to other things. In other words, to stylize means to generalize. It means to isolate a particular spatial substance that allows one to organize

non-identical things into a finite order of similitude, to isolate a common denominator among a group of objects or events. A stylized rose, as Simmel writes, is “supposed to represent the general character of a rose, the style of rose, not the individual character of a specific rose”. This means that the concept of style is “a means of establishing relationships among individual works of art” (Ackerman 1962), which is also true for any other societal object (when someone says that two houses are constructed in the same style, it implies that they possess some qualities that negate their individual nature and carry the note of generality). Precisely how these relationships are established is the problem of aesthetics. Style has to be recognized as such, and this, as Andrew Benjamin writes, involves a relationship between “appearance, recognition and identification” (Benjamin 2006 p.x). What allows observers to perceive the fusion of Byzantine, Islamic and Latin Christian architectural forms as corresponding to the distinguished Venetian style involves a certain imaginative process that happens precisely at the aesthetic level. It is in the nature of world that two separate objects or events cannot share all of their properties, but it is in the nature of human thought that object or events are understood only through the similitudes that humans perceive, conceive or imagine they share.

The problem of style is always connected with the problem of identity and transformation. The invention of historicity, as Benjamin understood it, was an attempt to establish a continuity that was broken by modernity. Although it would be wrong to assume that arguments for continuity are somehow the denial of the modern, it is also true that to affirm modernity implies a certain affirmation of the discontinuity (Benjamin 2006, p.xiv). Historicity involves continuity, novelty discontinuity. What unites us with the nineteenth-century modern world, according to Berman, are “the contradictory forces and needs that inspire and torment us: our desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past, and our insatiable desire for growth — not merely for economic growth but for growth in experience, in pleasure, in knowledge, in sensibility — growth that destroys both the physical and social landscapes of our past, and our emotional links with those lost worlds.” (Berman 1988, 35). These inner tensions are clearly expressed in the following aesthetic judgments:

“Écoutez je n'ai pas l'habitude de choisir les choses que je trouve laides. Je ne sais pas, si vous prenez mon bureau ici, eh bien, j'ai éliminé toute modernité, parce que bon voilà, c'est mon gout. Et je trouve que ce bureau est bien, voilà, pour moi. Donc, j'ai aménagé ce bureau alors que si vous allez dans tous les autres bureaux, ils ont des meubles complètement standardisés.” - David, 65, périurbain (ville).

“Je pense que j'ai de la peine avec tout ce qui est moderne en fait. Alors qu'il y a un moderne [appartement] qui peut être super beau. Mais pour moi c'est que du pratique, des logements pratiques, utiles.” - Emilia, 57, ville (bord de ville).

“Comme je disais, des fois on est un peu... on peut trouver moches aussi des choses juste parce qu'on regrette quelque part une perte d'une certaine beauté. Je pense aussi peut-être que c'est dans ce sens-là qu'on peut être déjà presque irrité, par un chantier dans un quartier comme ça [photo 2]. (...) C'est vrai quand je repense maintenant à Saint Saphorin, c'est vrai que quelque part, d'un côté, y a quelque chose d'un peu artificiel aussi, de garder comme ça un village très homogène, qu'avec des maisons anciennes pratiquement où il n'y a presque pas une maison un peu plus contemporaine. Mais c'est d'un autre côté de moi.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

“J'aurais de la facilité à considérer quelque chose de beau, en terme d'architecture, etc., comme quelque chose de plutôt ancien. Il y a quelque chose d'assez, je pense... il y a pas mal de gens qui ont peut-être cet a priori. (...) Ce qui est plus ancien, néoclassique ou j'en sais rien, aura plutôt, sera vu comme beau.” - Lucas, 29, ville (ville)

“Chez mes grands-parents, il y a des trucs comme ça à l'intérieur. C'est une vieille ferme, que mon grand-père a retapée et y a des endroits où il a laissé les poutres comme ça. (...) Je suis allé parfois à la montagne. On allait dans des chalets et puis les balcons, ça ressemble un peu à des balcons de chalets. Mais je pense que dans ma tête, un peu, j'ai l'impression de facilement associer beau et ancien. Je ne sais pas pourquoi.” - Amir, 25, ville (ville)

“[Photo 11] Oui, je trouve ça, c'est encore pas mal oui. Dans le genre paysage urbain, je trouve que c'est encore pas mal. (...) Mais ça, c'est typiquement le genre de trucs qu'à 20 ans, j'aurais trouvé ça moche. Alors ça c'est sûr. (...) Moi à 20 ans, pour moi un centre-ville, ça devait être comme Bâle ou Berne, en tous cas, des coins comme ça avec pratiquement que des bâtiments médiévaux anciens comme ça, médiévaux, en tous cas d'avant le XIXe disons.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

“[Photo 16] C'est à Genève. Ça c'est bien, c'est beau. Ça c'est peu comme le style de ce quartier ici. Oui ça c'est magnifique. J'aime bien. Parce que ça fait aussi penser un peu à Paris. Avec ces appartements mansardés et puis les toits en ardoise. Ça c'est vraiment... oui, belle époque, c'est très beau. Ça aussi, très beau, un peu à l'italienne, un peu néo-renaissance. Ça je trouve que c'est chouette. (...) Parfois je suis frappé par des gens qui ne regardent même pas, qui disent tout de suite « ah oui, voilà. Tout ce qui est plus vieux que 1500 c'est beau et tout ce qui est après, c'est laid ». (...) D'abord je dirais que c'est une sorte de mainstream, actuellement, quand on demande, je ne parle pas des architectes, des professionnels, mais disons chez les gens. Ils ne regardent même pas quelque chose qui est moderne. Il y a beaucoup de gens pour qui c'est a priori laid. Alors, pourquoi ? On est dans une époque où on pense que l'ancien est beau et le nouveau pas beau ? (...) Il y a une

part de nostalgie, je pense. Ça, les gens aiment parce qu'ils ont l'impression que c'est le bon vieux temps. (...) C'est le côté idylle, le paradis perdu, etc." - Peter, 63, ville (ville)

Stagnation occurs when thoughts and objects are perpetually replicated, but it is also true that unlimited variation is usually perceived as disjointed or chaotic. Modern individuals must position themselves between the consistency of a controlled, reassuring environment, often epitomized in the ideal of historicity, and the excitement of novelty which is always seen as otherness, as something that opposes itself to stylization, or as a mere negation of an existing style. Researchers must also be careful not to create an abyss between two apparently opposing ideals. As George Kubler writes in "The Shape of Time", "invention is misunderstood in two ways: both as a dangerous departure from routine, or as an unconsidered lapse into the unknown. (...) Many societies have accordingly proscribed all recognition of inventive behavior, preferring to reward ritual repetition, rather than to permit inventive variations. On the other hand no form of society ever can be devised to allow each person the liberty to vary his actions indefinitely. Every society functions like a gyroscope to hold the course despite the random private forces of deflection" (Kubler 2008, 61-2). His argument is that innovation slowly emerges from habit, i.e., from long sequences of repetitiveness. This fact was theoretically recognized, perhaps for the first time, in 1946, by Lefebvre in his "Critique de la vie quotidienne", where he argued that the triviality of the everyday holds a distinct potential for creative energy.

Yet, there seems to be a significant difference in the dynamics of change between various environments. As it concentrates diverse urban actors on a dense territory, the city generates change through the intensity of its interactions. The cityscape and streetscape of the modern city are rapidly changing, perpetually leaving a trace of the changes occurring in the values of society. The heterogeneity of cities' urban and architectural styles thus reflects the complexity of the urban space and social interactions. More than any other spatial configuration, the city is a place of coexistence for a variety of styles. "The full range of artistic careers, from precursors to rebels, thus can unfold only under metropolitan conditions, when a wide selection of active sequences is available" (Kubler 2008, 88). This necessarily produces some drawbacks as well. The consequence of the unprecedented acceleration of trade and population of big cities is an increasing awareness of the need to protect our cultural and urban heritage. Innovation, replication, and mutation, as Kubler writes, are continuously conversing through time. What will be protected and how it will be protected is constantly submitted to the process of societal negotiation. The concerns of the aesthetic are also what simply 'fits in', and what does not. This choice is most often an aesthetic choice, though sometimes it is difficult to

admit this. Style, which epitomizes the problem of sameness and difference, of fitness and unfitness, is an issue that kept cropping up in all of the thirty interviews I conducted:

“Lausanne, franchement, personnellement, je ne trouve pas qu’elle soit une belle ville. Il y’a un tel mélange de toutes les architectures, pas nécessairement très pensées, comme s’ils avaient fait au meilleur marché ou quoi. On construit un cube, pouf ! On en met les gens dedans et voilà. Tellement hétéroclite comme ça, tu as une maison comme ça, après tu as une autre différente. L’esthétique à Lausanne, en tout cas, l’urbanisme lausannois, je trouve que c’est assez catastrophique. Voilà, c’est ça ce que je peux dire de Lausanne. Je ne trouve pas que Lausanne soit une belle ville.” - Chantal, 65, périurbain (campagne)

“[Photo 1] Ça s’accorde bien ensemble. Les maisons, déjà, sont, comment le dire, en harmonie, parce qu’ils ont respecté une même architecture. S’ils ont mis n’importe quoi, certainement, moins jolie. Ça ferait certainement moins un bel ensemble, le tout. Voilà, et même le village lui-même, s’ils avaient construit un truc moderne, en fait, sans respecter l’architecture générale, il n’aurait sûrement pas cette harmonie générale. Et puis les toits. Tu retrouves la couleur, la forme, en fin, non-moi je trouve c’est très harmonieux.” - Chantal, 65, périurbain (campagne)

“- Qu’est ce qu’il faut pour qu’un espace habité soit beau ?

- Bon déjà il faut que ce soit en harmonie avec ce qui est autour. Soit au niveau de la couleur, soit au niveau de la grandeur, de la taille et du style aussi. Si on a par exemple un village avec vingt maisons et puis qu’il y a quinze qui sont différentes totalement les unes des autres ça va pas être un beau village. Il faut quand même qu’il y a un style commun à toutes.” - Patrick, 34, village (village)

“[Photo 14] C’est à Montreux, oui. Les styles très différents, avec ce truc extraordinaire. Ensuite le truc moderne, ça, c’est une belle façade, je pense, années 20, 30, hein ? Mais j’aime bien ! Ça aussi, c’est un peu dépareillé, mais l’ensemble est plutôt chouette. (...) Alors, je trouve que quand il y a une certaine unité, même s’il y a certains éléments qui ne sont pas géniaux, il y a toujours quelque chose d’intéressant, dans l’unité. Alors là aussi, on peut voir sûrement deux ou trois choses qui ne sont pas prises isolément, qui ne sont pas extraordinaires. Mais il y a une certaine unité. Ensuite, je trouve que quand on mélange les styles, mais que chaque élément a une certaine beauté à soi, ça peut aussi devenir intéressant. (...) Là c’est un peu comme une femme qui s’habille un peu avec des trucs, qui mélange les styles, mais chaque habit a une certaine qualité.” - Peter, 63, ville (ville)

“Les villes, elles sont telles qu’elles sont. Et puis, à moins si vous voulez vraiment faire une belle scène, il faudrait presque tout raser pour refaire, donc vous ne

pouvez pas. Là, chaque bâtiment est très différent les uns des autres, il y en a pas un qui est semblable. Donc c'est pour ça aussi que ça fait qu'il y a pas tellement de charme. Mais ça ne me dérange pas. Mais de là à dire que c'est une belle scène, non. Non." - Mériel, 65, périurbain (ville)

"[Photo 10] Il n'y a pas vraiment d'unité finalement, t'as l'impression que les périodes architecturales cohabitent, ils changent un bâtiment pour en construire un autre, puis le style va avec celui de l'époque. Mais il n'y a pas trop d'unité. J'étais à Londres le weekend passé et là-bas, toutes les maisons c'est toutes les mêmes couleurs pratiquement. Il y a une unité, comme en Hollande aussi. Toutes les maisons ont le même style, la même couleur, alors ça peut être un peu ennuyeux, d'un certain point de vue. Ce qu'on a pas en Suisse, justement, nous, on n'a, je trouve, qu'on n'a pas un style de maison. On a plusieurs styles. Alors voilà, je trouve assez typique de la Suisse." - Claudia, 34, périurbain (petite ville)

"- Belles maisons à colombages. Là je vois aussi Strasbourg. C'est sympa. Ça c'est un quartier qui me plaît, qui me plaît beaucoup. Alors il y a du moderne, du plus ancien. J'aime bien le mélange, même le colombage qui est très ancien, je trouve que ça a beaucoup de charme. Ça c'est très esthétique, c'est très joli. Et cette bâtisse moderne, celle-là elle me plaît. Et bien de nouveau, il y a beaucoup de fenêtres, donc j'imagine beaucoup de lumière. Et puis ces vieux bâtiments sont absolument magnifiques. Je trouve que c'est de la belle architecture qui a été bien rénovée avec de belles pierres blanches. C'est un joli quartier. Là, je pourrais presque m'y voir habiter. J'aime bien cette photo. (...). Là, ce mélange-là ne me dérange pas du tout, alors qu'il y a quand même trois styles complètement différents. Trois, voire même quatre avec ce bâtiment qui ne ressemble pas du tout à celui-là. Ça, oui c'est un mélange qui me plaît. Je trouve ça très esthétique.

- Pourquoi ?

- Je ne sais pas. Je trouve que c'est harmonieux. Je ne vais pas reparler des couleurs, je me tais. Non, mais voilà, de nouveau les couleurs sont apaisantes, jolies. Étonnamment, le gris qui me déplaisait sur d'autres bâtiments ici, ne me déplaît pas. Mais c'est marié à cette espèce de bleu-gris comme ça, donc j'aime beaucoup. Ça, c'est du récent que j'aime bien. Oui. Et puis ce colombage, je trouve ça absolument magnifique quoi, c'est de toute beauté." - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

"[Photo 7] Ça, ça me plaît nettement moins. Voilà de nouveau, tout ce qui est trop, toutes ces maisons contiguës, qui se ressemblent les unes les autres"- Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

"Maintenant, mon impression c'est que tout le monde peut faire n'importe quoi. Dans le même village là à Saint Livres, il y avait plein de règlements et tout ça, et puis tout d'un coup, je suis remontée après quelques années, je vois des immeubles

en béton, des balcons en béton, ces espèces de trucs qu'on verrait, je ne sais pas, sur voilà une côte grecque pour un hôtel, mais pas là ! Alors, je ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé, mais dans les règlements communaux, y a un truc qui m'échappe quoi. Je me dis, en fait dans les communes, l'esthétique elle était aussi importante puisqu'on ne voulait pas dénaturer la cohésion du village avec ces maisons qui avaient une cohésion entre elles, puis maintenant, on s'en fiche, on démolit, puis on fait des immeubles et puis ils sont tous les mêmes.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

“[Photo 1] - Ça je trouve beau. Alors déjà le fait que ça ne soit pas tout plat. Le mélange nature et main de l'homme. Le fait que ça soit au bord du lac. Les types de murs, j'aime bien ça. Les maisons aussi. Alors ce que j'aime bien dans les maisons, quoi, les ... le fait qu'elles ne soient pas toutes droites, mais qu'elles soient un peu bordéliques si on peut dire. Les couleurs aussi qui sont, bon ça n'a rien d'exceptionnel, mais, sympathique. Voilà en gros c'est plus ou moins ça. Puis ça va, on ne voit pas trop le train, la ligne de train, donc ça va.

- Tu penses que la ligne de train, elle est moche ?

- La ligne de train en soi non, mais quand il y a le train qui passe tout le temps, je pense c'est un peu ... enfin moi, je ne sais pas, je n'habite pas là-bas, mais je pense que ça peut gêner un petit peu.

- Et le village tu le trouves beau?

- Oui, je l'aime bien, parce qu'il est un peu bordélique comme ça et puis que les maisons elles n'ont pas toutes la même hauteur. On ne s'ennuie pas en le regardant. Voilà c'est peut-être ça, ce que je n'aime pas en fait chez moi c'est qu'on s'ennuie en regardant...

- Tu penses que là il y a une variété qui peut être...

- Oui, il y a une variété, tout en ayant le même style. Parce que, y a une variété dans les types de toits, la hauteur, la largeur, l'assemblage, mais y a quand même un style dans le sens où, on n'a pas un grand bloc, rien à voir avec ça, les tons de couleurs sont plus ou moins pareils. Bon c'est quand même, c'est tous des toits pointus, y a des petites variations entre eux, mais y a quand même le même style, y a partout des cheminées, y a ces volets qui ne sont pas de la même couleur, mais qui sont partout plus ou moins pareils. Oui. Voilà c'est ça.” - Amir, 25, ville (ville)

“[Photo 16] Ça me plaît parce que c'est... il y a de l'unité. Même si vous prenez comme ça, il y a de l'unité imaginée, car c'est un peu un autre style. Non-moi je trouve ça plaisant.” - David, 65, périurbain (ville)

There should be no confusion. Not every kind of unity is necessarily perceived in a positive manner. Unity is always a unity of something, and this “something” always bears the ethical and the political dimension. The repetitive character of low-income housing (often referred to as “blocs soviétiques”) excites different judgements than the uniformity of Haussmann facades in Paris or the organicity of the whitewashed villages of Puglia,

Andalusia or Greece. The appeal of the earlier pre-industrial environment lies in the apparent unity of the unique and the general – a unity expressed in the consensus regarding the question of style. The feeling of a “Paradise Lost” is in fact a reaction to the disintegration of the stylistic uniformity of the pre-modern time, as Simmel argued in 1991 (1991). It is in this sense that is important for researchers to take into account the persistence of the suburban ideal, and the appeal of the picturesque ideal. The traditional picturesque town symbolizes lost ‘organicism’ while the suburban ideal is a chance for a unity regained.

Et bien c'est un petit peu, c'est un peu comme l'histoire de Saint Saphorin quoi. C'est-à-dire, je pense qu'il y a des centres-villes comme ça, des fois ou justement conservés qui nous renvoient par exemple assez clairement vers une époque historique par exemple ou bien vers un style de vie qui est peut être aussi différent du nôtre maintenant ou des choses comme ça, et puis du coup ça génère comme ça des associations positives en fait, même de ce fait là en fait. Je ne sais pas si on prend par exemple...qu'est ce qu'il y a comme ça, je ne sais pas, certaine villes méridionales ou comme ça, à quoi je pensais par exemple...ben en Italie par exemple, il y pas mal de villes comme ça où on a vraiment l'impression quand on se promène (...) on est comme ça vraiment renvoyés vers un passé quand même relativement lointain. C'est ça. Je pense que des fois, pour moi, c'est peut-être ça le côté un petit peu idyllique. C'est, finalement, c'est aussi des choses qui nous renvoient vers un autre monde qu'on idéalise peut-être aussi d'une certaine manière et puis des histoires un peu comme ça.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

At the same time, too much unity might appear as disturbing as the total absence of unity.

“[Photo 7] Monotone, monotone, monotone et puis bon, ben, ce toit, c'est probablement pas des idées très nouvelles, mais ce toit vu de l'extérieur me semble pas très gracieux. (...) Il n'est pas très intéressant. Surtout quand il se répète comme ça.” - Elisabeth, périurbain (périurbain)

“[Photo 10] Alors je trouve que c'est dommage de mélanger les genres, voilà. J'ai plus aimé ce petit quartier résidentiel où il n'y avait que des petites maisons un peu pareilles, des jolies maisons villageoises, enfin il y a avait cela dit, une maison moderne au milieu, ça, ça ne me déplaisait pas. Maintenant de mélanger les gros immeubles, avec des anciennes maisons qui sont plus typiques, je trouve ça un petit peu dommage.” - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

Human beings' preoccupation with style is first a preoccupation with time, with change. A change in style always marks the passage of time, for style is always a sign of

continuity, of stability. It eliminates inner contradictions and evokes consistency, neatness and security. The constitution of style is always a mark of a victory of being over becoming. Any preoccupation with style is automatically a preoccupation with a societal change. The question "In what style shall we build?" is another way of asking "In what society shall we live?" If researchers wish to explore the nature of change, the best thing to do is to ask people if they find cities ugly or beautiful:

"[Photo 11] Moi j'adore l'assemblage comme ça. Il y a des bâtiments, ben, je passe de temps en temps ici, puis j'étais au gymnase ici, donc il y a des bâtiments que j'aime bien là. Surtout sur cette rangée-là, celui-là j'adore, même si les couleurs elles sont moches, j'aime bien... je ne sais pas, il y a quelque chose. Et oui, y a un mouvement là. Puis on voit que, ils ont rien de particulier les nouveaux bâtiments qu'ils sont faits mais en fait, je n'avais pas vraiment vu mais on voit qu'il y a quand même... ils suivent un mouvement. Ils ont fait l'effort de les intégrer à ce qu'il y avait déjà là. (...) Et puis y a des pavés, j'aime bien les pavés. En fait ce que j'aime bien, c'est le côté urbain en fait que, les maisons collées les unes aux autres, comme ça. Qu'il n'y ait pas la même hauteur. Elles ont, elles ont le même style mais elles sont différentes. Donc on peut déduire qu'elles ont été construites à des époques, à des moments différents. Et donc il y a une certaine histoire. Oui." - Amir, 25, ville (ville)

"- Alors, je dois dire que j'ai, par rapport à Lausanne, peu d'affection pour cette ville. Vraiment. Je n'aime pas cette ville. Donc je suis un Lausannois. Je suis né à Lausanne, vécu à Lausanne quasiment jusqu'à 50 ans mais je n'ai jamais aimé Lausanne.

- Vous avez des raisons ?

- Ah c'est l'architecture. Ah je déteste Lausanne. Enfin, il y a des quartiers qui sont plaisants, mais c'est une ville où dès qu'il y a un immeuble intérieur à, disons 1950 on détruit, on fait une tour, ou je ne sais pas. Ce n'est même pas des tours, parce qu'on n'ose pas faire des tours. On fait un immeuble moderne comme ça, bien en verre, partout, partout, partout. (...)

- Que pensez vous, comment cette manière de faire s'est développé à Lausanne ?

- Ecoutez moi, je pense que c'est le mauvais gout. C'est une ville de paysans. C'est une ville qui n'avait pas de patriciens comme Bale, Fribourg, Bern. C'est une ville qui était occupée par les Bernois. C'est une ville de commerce, de paysans... enfin, j'habite un village, et ce n'est pas ça. C'est plus de commerce. On détruit. Si vous cherchez de grands Lausannois, ou des gens qui ont habité à Lausanne, il n'y a quasiment plus de maisons. On met la petite plaque "ici a vécu", mais ce n'est pas la maison. C'est, si vous voulez, l'endroit géographique où a vécu quelqu'un, mais ce n'est rien. Vous voyez. Vous ne pouvez pas dire que la personne a vécu dedans. Il n'y a pas de passé. On n'ose quand même pas détruire l'hôtel de ville. Voilà. Ni le musée Arlaud, ni la cathédrale, bien qu'un temps ils voulaient presque faire, si j'ai

bien compris, un parking dessous. Voilà. Le château, on vas pas toucher le château. Mais si vous prenez le château, et si vous regardez les photos anciennes, il y avait une porte qui fermait cette rue. Ils ont rasé. C'est une mentalité depuis 1850 dans cette ville, c'est de raser. Vous prenez St François. Il y avait un couvent autour. Bon. C'est devenu protestant. D'accord. Il n'y plus de moines. Mais on a rasé pour faire l'hôtel de poste. Et pour faire la banque, machin. Le SBS à l'époque ou, bien après, plus loin, la BCV. Comment une ville peut raser un couvent des franciscains du Moyen Âge ? Non. Non. C'est un manque de gout. C'est un manque de respect. C'est tout ce que vous voulez, mais ce n'est pas de la culture. (...) Il y a beaucoup de gens qui ne comprennent pas, parce qu'ils adorent Lausanne à cause de la verdure. C'est vrai, c'est peut-être la ville la plus verte de Suisse semble-t-il. Si on fait abstraction de Sauvabelin, du bois du Jorat, évidemment, il n'y a pas mal d'arbres, c'est vrai. Mais ça ne me suffit pas.” - David, 65, périurbain (ville)

“Lausanne, c'est horrible parce qu'ils construisent tout et n'importe quoi. Il y a toutes les modes, tout les styles, il y a tout. Le Syndic de Lausanne disait, à Lausanne il y a 300.000 habitants, mais je ne sais pas si c'est 300.000, s'il y a 300.000 urbanistes. (...) Il y a des habitations qui sont certainement très chouettes, mais je ne sais pas si c'est un peu la ville qui me fait peur, je ne sais pas si j'ai envie d'habiter en ville. Parfois oui, parce que tout est proche, on n'a pas de problème pour trouver, je ne sais pas, pour aller à l'hôpital, un médecin, un dentiste, on a besoin de prendre le train, des bus ou je ne sais pas quoi. Mais sortir de chez moi et tomber sur un trottoir, sur une avenue, sur une rue avec des voitures, partout, ce n'est pas mon truc.” - Silvia, 55, périurbain (périurbain)

When one speaks of a person's style, one refers to a certain way of being, a way of *making do* with space, as de Certeau would say (1990), each individual being defined by a singular style of spatiality (Lévy 2013, 950; Lussault 2007). In his last work entitled “Esquisse pour une auto-analyse” (2004), Pierre Bourdieu specifically writes about a coherence between his style of being and his style of thinking, which reflects a certain consistency in the way he acts, works and writes. In a way, he was attempting to apply to his own case a method of analysis which he has performed earlier on the case of Heidegger and the case Flaubert - a certain archeology of individual style. To have a style means to affirm one's own existence, which, as Pachet argues, is much less defined by a specific content, or an essence, and more by a way through which each individual appropriates or modifies content (Macé 2010).

In September 2016, The Guardian published a text on unwritten dress codes, inspired by a study led by the government's social mobility commission (Davies 2016). According to the study, wearing brown shoes is the ultimate faux pas among bankers in the City. “Never wear brown in town”, is an old rule about what shoes the gentlemen of London's

financial district must wear. Apparently, the same negative judgments are applied to those who appear uncomfortable in a suit, wear a loud tie, or lack abstract qualities such as “polish” or “aura”. This strong sense of style has contributed to creating distance between investment banking candidates, and non-privileged candidates from non-elite universities and schools (see Moore et al. 2016). This is not a particularly peculiar behavior, characteristic of a certain social class. Indeed, examples of these kinds of behaviors are endless and observed in a variety of social groups. What City bankers share with religious and traditional communities, but also with organized armies, punk movement fans, or even naturists on a nude beach, is a strong sense of belonging to a group that is expressed through a certain consensus of style. To stylize oneself is always a sign of embracing a particular way of being (fr. *manière d'être*).

Here one thing must be underlined. Unlike a work of art, the human subject is not a coherent unity. Individuals are always in a process of (re)constitution and full of inner contradictions, as the scientific works on cognitive dissonance have demonstrated (for the overview see Fischer et al. 2008). Because of their polytopic (Stock 2006) existence, an individual cannot be summarized as an organism, as a body. An individual is different than its body, because an individual stretches out to include themselves into the various societal levels to which production (or destruction) they contribute. An individual is never a unity for he/she exists as a part of society that is based, to a various degrees, on the principle of heterogeneity.

The ethnologist Karla Werner suggested that the way in which inhabitants, as self-reflective modern subjects, make do with the various spaces of the city, helps them bring together different or even contradictory aspects of their own individuality. Just as each part of a city can represent a part of their fragmented individuality, the city as a whole seems to help them construct a certain coherence out of a highly fragmented reality (Werner 1991). Aesthetic space provides individuals with the possibility of reconstituting (at least partially) the broken pieces of their modern urban existence and producing new meanings of the world they are a part of. Urban experience, as highly fragmented, is therefore highly aesthetic.

When individuals interact in an environment, they also want their individuality to be recognized. What appears to be the specificity of modernity is precisely the unprecedented liberation of coexisting ways of being, i.e., the multiplication of coexisting styles.⁴⁵ This coexistence of different styles appears to be an indicator of the degree of urbanity of a certain urban reality. Urban space, and more precisely public urban space

acts as space per excellence, where individuals expose themselves and at the same time observe others. It is therefore essential to understand how the urban environment shapes individuals' aesthetic sensibilities and influences the way that their aesthetic judgements evolve and change, but also, how the aesthetic dimension orients and influences urban praxis.

Aesthetic Judgement and the Gradients of Urbanity

In 1994, the Pompidou Center in Paris organized a very important exhibition entitled “La ville, art et architecture en Europe, 1870-1993”, where painters, engravers, photographers and film-makers, as Françoise Choay writes, drew “attention to the dual nature of the city: beneficial for some, a symbol of progress and beauty, brimming with social life even in the anonymity of large crowds; and evil for others, synonymous with chaos, perversion, any type of ugliness and destitution that the cinematic aesthetic has captured so successfully” (Guiheux and Pompidou 1994, 24). As humanity moves through the twenty-first century, many are still guided by aesthetic ideals that originated in early nineteenth-century England, when many members of the rising bourgeoisie class started to reject the idea of living in the city center. They created a suburban environment that fed on the idea of exclusion – exclusion of both different styles of living and competing cultural values. As Robert Fishman argued, suburbanization was not the automatic fate of the middle class in the “mature industrial city” or an inevitable response to the Industrial Revolution or the so-called “transport revolution”. Contrary to the bourgeois English, the equally bourgeois Parisians and Viennese followed a very different vision and stayed in the city centre.⁴⁶ To reject the city as a residential environment “was a conscious choice based on the economic structure and cultural values of the Anglo-American bourgeoisie” (Fishman 1987, p. 8). At the start, it was not a project planned by the government but rather a marginal form intended for, and created by, a restricted elite, which then grew to become the choice of residency for the English middle-class. It is one of the most striking examples of a bottom-up organization of urban space, and it demonstrates the fundamental role of ‘small’ actors (Lévy 2014) in the processes that structure urban environments. Suburbia emerged as a result of a

⁴⁵ A great paradox of modernist architecture lies in the attempt to establish one single international style, which is a profoundly anti-modern idea.

⁴⁶ During the 1840s, the most prosperous French merchants and bankers also left the crowded center, but not for suburban villas. Instead, they created a new urban district, called the Chaussée d'Antin, which embodied the ‘suburban’ principles of domesticity, privacy, and class segregation, but in an urban setting (Fishman, 1987, p. 109).

dazzling fragmentation of the modern city — a fragment that somehow found itself isolated — and should be understood and approached as such. In other words suburban or periurban environments need to be understood within the complex mechanisms that structure the city and its periphery.

A single-family house with an exclusively residential character placed in a natural setting represents stability, a community raised on the primacy of private property, a chance for a family to develop in restored harmony with nature – a way of regaining the Paradise Lost. Peri-urban inhabitants are often couples and nuclear families in search for stability and ‘rooting’. The spatial, social and historical conditions in Switzerland appear to be quite favorable to the development of this particular urban type. First, the Swiss territory is highly fragmented both horizontally and vertically (Navez-Bouchanine 2002); Second, animosity toward cities has never ceased to be a sentiment shared by a large part of Switzerland’s population (Cavin and Marchand 2010) (although there has been an important shift regarding the perception of city over the last decade); Third, Swiss society has long cultivated the ideal of a closed nuclear family, and; Finally, its landscapes correspond to (or were seen at the time as corresponding to) the romantic aesthetic ideal on which the suburban picturesque image developed. A 2015 study based on the information of the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) showed that two elements distinguish peri-urban dwellers from non peri-urban dwellers: family formation and full-time employment. Occupation, income and education do not seem to show a significant importance for the moving in the peri-urban zone (Van Den Hende 2015). Periurban inhabitants express attitudes that are apparently anti- and pro- communitarian; they almost unanimously reject the idea of the “forced” cohabitation in collective popular housing blocs, and affirm the qualities of a small community of individuals with more or less similar lifestyles (the lifestyle epitomized in the single-family household and a strong dependence on the automobile) (Lévy 2013, 1080). This highly ‘stylized’ way of inhabiting is often clearly expressed in the aesthetic judgements of peri-urban residents, which appear as both the reflections and confirmations of their day-to-day spatialities, even often in an idealized manner:

“- [Photo 15] C’est ça qui correspond au rêve. Il y a tout ce qu’il faut, là. Les jouets des enfants, leur côté « je vais faire quand même faire un peu écolo » en étant à peu près indépendants. Ils auraient pas dû mettre des plantes tropicales, ça, ce n’est pas bien du tout. Ils ont quand même séparé les voisins par une barrière, on veut quand même être chez soi. Non, ça, c’est la caricature, comme on n’en fait pas, des maisons individuelles.

- Mais pourquoi pensez-vous que c’est un rêve quoi ?

- Mais parce qu’on a envie d’être, on a envie d’avoir son nid, son chez-soi, c’est un rêve. C’est un rêve de ne pas avoir de voisin, de faire sa lessive quand on a envie

mais pas que c'est le jour que le concierge a indiqué. De pouvoir laisser ses enfants aller jouer, d'inviter les copains à boire l'apéro sous la tonnelle, même si après il faut tout ranger, tout nettoyer et tout. C'est vrai, ça fait envie d'avoir de la verdure. D'avoir des roses et un figuier et d'être chez soi. Ah oui, ça, c'est une envie, mais je suis mal placée pour dire qu'il ne faut pas !" - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

"C'est les anciens qui sont condamnés. Voilà. De toute façon, ils ont démoli ici, ils ont démoli partout partout. Il y avait une petite villa, il avait son petit jardin, il y avait l'étendage pour le linge, un petit... des arbres fruitiers, etc. Donc voilà, je pense que, les personnes, on les voyait dans leur jardin. Le voisin venait dire « salut, dis donc, je n'ai pas beaucoup de fleurs sur mon cerisier cette année, on n'aura pas beaucoup de cerises ». « Mais oui ». La poésie de la vie." - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

"[Photo 5] Alors là c'est un peu la petite maison dans la prairie, dans les vignes. Oui, oui, très joli, quoi. Oui en fait, si ça pouvait être proche des commodités d'une ville ou autre, je trouverais ça assez parfait comme vie, dans le sens où, j'imagine, si s'est rénové à l'intérieur ça peut avoir vachement de cachet. Vue sur les vignes, c'est super joli, un peu tranquille comme quartier, je pense que c'est une belle maison." - Claudia, 34, périurbain (petite ville)

A 2008 study of the The Swiss national research program showed that when it comes to the attractiveness of cities, "families and elderly people are characterised by negative migration balances while international migrants, small households and young adults have positive ones" (Rérat et al. 2010). This reflects the observation of Aragones according to whom "[c]ities have more young people and single-person households, which have relatively high preference for rental dwellings... Generally, multifamily housing is a city phenomenon; rural areas have almost exclusively single-family housing stock. Rental housing is also strongly over-represented in central cities, whereas suburbs and rural regions have a predominantly owner-occupied housing stock. These preferences, of course, reflect variations in the availability and the price of land between cities and suburban and rural regions." (Aragones, cited in Frankhauser and Ansel 2016, 57). A choice of a residential environment becomes the question of day-to-day experience and the way that everyday life is practiced and organized. Some city inhabitants do aesthetically dismiss periurban areas precisely because they dismiss the lifestyle that is actualized by this particular urban type:

"[Photo 7] Là c'est vraiment un peu, Desperate Housewives comme ça, les quartiers résidentiels, ou tu sors de chez toi et t'as les voisins qui notent à quelle heure tu vas faire tes courses où j'en sais rien. Ça a un côté, pas assez d'anonymat dans une zone comme ça. Aussi le fait d'avoir forcément besoin d'une voiture,

parce que je ne pense pas qu'on peut vraiment se déplacer en transport en commun dans un quartier comme ça. Et puis le petit jardin aussi, là mitoyen, ça c'est quelque chose que je ne sais pas, pour moi c'est tous les inconvénients d'habiter en ville et puis tous les inconvénients d'habiter à la campagne réunis. (...) Ici, on est quand même plutôt, oui, au milieu de tout le monde et en même temps, on n'a pas les avantages de la ville qui sont liés à toutes les activités culturelles ou la proximité des transports ou quelque chose comme ça. Donc c'est quelque chose que je ne considérerais pas ça comme beau. (...) En fait, ce n'est pas un mode de vie qui m'attire, donc j'aurais tendance à considérer aussi ces maisons comme moches.” - Lucas, ville (ville)

“[Photo 12] Desperate Housewives là. En fait moi, ça me fait penser, il y a aussi des quartiers comme ça où, ce qui me fait encore plus peur, c'est, ils mettent police de proximité ou je ne sais trop quoi. C'est des autocollants ou ils disent, en fait, ils disent aux gens, c'est pour leur dire surveillez ce qui se passe autour de chez vous et faites la police en fait. Et si vous voyez quelqu'un que vous ne connaissez pas, appelez la police ou je ne sais pas. Il y a donc vraiment une forme de, aussi une paranoïa, de gens qui font justice eux-mêmes, ou qui appellent la police parce qu'ils voient des gens qui ne sont pas du village ou du quartier. Ça, c'est quelque chose que je n'aimerais pas devoir expérimenter quoi.” - Lucas, 29, ville (ville)

“[Photo 7] Ça je n'aime pas. Oui, ça je n'aime pas. J'aime pas et en même temps, comment dire ? Je n'aime pas sur le principe. (..) Je n'aime pas. Ici, par exemple, je critique toujours Romanelle, je dis, moi je m'en fous, je préfère rester à Rolle locataire toute ma vie, que de m'acheter ma petite maison à Romanelle. Bon, c'est un peu snob de parler comme ça, parce que dans les faits, une fois si vous voulez vous acheter un bien immobilier et puis que vous n'êtes pas hyper riche, bien y a de fortes chances de tomber dans ce genre de choses. (..) Mais ça n'empêche, je ne sais pas comment dire, c'est un peu snob, mais non, je ne trouve pas ça très beau. En même temps, ça doit être chouette d'avoir sa maison comme ça. Mais ce n'est pas ce qui m'inspire le plus. Ça m'évoque les séries américaines, genre Desperate Housewives ou Weeds.” - Sabrina, 35, ville (ville)

Between the ideal (image) of the picturesque village, the rustic vineyard house or the periurban area stands equally idealised (image) of a dense and diverse city, as a sort of their antithesis. However, between the two ideals there is an entire urban reality still waiting to be recognized as such. The presence of many neologisms shows how some environments generate relatively complex spatial configurations that are in opposition to traditional categories: e.g., “ville-territoire” (Corboz 1990), “Zwithenstadt” (Sieverts 2000), “ville-diffuse” (Secchi and Ingallina 2006), “ville-campagne” (Berque 2008), or more recently, “horizontal metropolis” (Vigano 2011). The authors of these concepts all share the same intent of providing meaning to a certain spatial configuration that

emerged as a result of the dispersion and decentralization of the urban environment - a spatial configuration where the distinction between city, periurban neighborhoods and the countryside is no longer self-evident. For many inhabitants, decoding these territories appears extremely difficult. Sabrina who lives in the city of Lausanne and Chantal who lives in a nearby periurban area share a similar judgement regarding the aesthetic character of such an environment:

“- [Photo 8] Oh ! Ça, je déteste. Ça, c'est le pire. Ça, c'est tout ce que je déteste. Oh ! C'est atroce. Ça, c'est laid. Ça c'est le style Pully ou Lutry ou je ne sais pas quoi. L'endroit c'est affreux, c'est le cauchemar absolu. Bien, pour moi c'est le cauchemar absolu parce que, comment vous dire ça... avant, vous m'avez demandé si j'étais sensible au manque d'homogénéité, je vous ai dit non, mais en fait oui. C'est n'importe quoi ça, pour moi c'est vraiment, je ne sais pas comment dire, c'est, on dirait que chacun a voulu construire son petit truc et puis il l'a fait et puis, ça va, je ne sais pas, avec un esprit un peu égocentrique, je ne sais pas comment dire. Non, je déteste. Vraiment c'est moche. Pour moi c'est moche parce que déjà ce n'est pas un centre urbain, mais quand même c'est vachement construit. Au moins la photo de Lavaux, enfin voilà, c'est une banlieue, enfin c'est un endroit bourgeois, mais c'est joli. Là vraiment, ce n'est pas joli, genre, chacun a fait son petit truc, c'est un peu industriel. C'est mort.

- Donc est ce que ça veut dire que vous acceptez l'hétérogénéité, mais que quand il y a une idée de vivre-ensemble ?

- Voilà exactement. C'est exactement ça. Oui c'est ça. Exactement.” - Sabrina, 35, ville (ville)

“- [Photo 8] Ouf, là c'est un peu le foutoir aussi, pour dire franchement la vérité. Il y'a vraiment de tout. Non, moi, je trouve pas ça très... Ce n'est pas un endroit qui m'inspire. Déjà c'est l'est de Lausanne, et en plus c'est assez bruyant. Bien sûr, beaucoup de circulation. Non alors, ce n'est pas pour moi. À moins d'y être forcé, et après, tu trouves ton compte.

- Qu'est ce qu'il ne te plaît pas ?

- Mais tout. L'anarchie des... même le tout, pas seulement l'anarchie des constructions, mais comme tout est conçu. En fin, qu'est-ce je peux te dire ? Il me semble dans ces quartiers-là c'est chacun pour soi. Tu fais que passer et puis les gens ils doivent... tu as l'impression que, oui, c'est chacun pour soi. Donc les gens ne doivent pas avoir de contact avec eux. Oui les uns avec les autres ou quoi. Je me trompe peut-être, mais moi ça me donne l'impression d'un endroit où tu passes, un endroit-dortoir ou quoi. Où tu passes, les gens passent là pour aller travailler, là pour entrer chez eux, mais, non c'est pas un endroit séduisant ça. (...) Il y'a peut-être l'influence de la saison où étaient prises les photos, mais quand même, de toute façon, chaque fois qu'on passe là-bas, j'ai cette sensation.” - Chantal, 65, périurbain (campagne)

Researchers often present the effects of urbanity by following the linear logics of the territory, which necessarily imply a lecture of society that follows that logics. Yet if I am to investigate the aesthetic character of urbanity, it is important to remember that, first and foremost, aesthetic space, as a space of aesthetic experience, has a topological character. To inhabit the urban environment aesthetically means it is necessary to surpass the rigid confines of territory by producing virtual spatialities with their inner logics and inner temporalities. This opens up the possibility for emergence of a rather interesting phenomenon: one can reside in one environment and inhabit another. This is why a purely pragmatic approach to the phenomenon of inhabiting comes with the risk of missing a fundamental part of the puzzle. Within a topographically delimited center, there will always be points that nihilate the very idea of the center itself. This is also valid in terms of the periphery. Some inhabitants of the city center reject its plurality and liveliness, seeing in the city nothing but an anonymous mass. At the same time, some inhabitants of the periurban areas dream of Geneva or Paris. Take for example the cases of Brigitte and David.

Brigitte who now lives in Lausanne, was born and grew up in a small village in the canton of Jura. She speaks of her residential environment as a space where she used to be bored to tears, particularly on Sunday afternoons. Coming to the city for her studies was the beginning of freedom, of real independence:

“La vie d’un village, c’est très sympathique et tout. Mais, c’est très oppressant, parce que tout le monde vraiment se connaît. Il y a aussi vraiment la notion d’individualité dans la ville, et puis d’ouverture à un monde plus grand, de tous les possibles. La ville était pour moi toutes les possibilités. Dieu sait que Lausanne n’est pas si grande ! C’était l’époque, comme ça. Et de voir plein d’autres choses. Voir des gens pressés, d’être dans une vie qui bouge plus, où il y a plus de vie, la ville égal la vie, je crois.” - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

When she was shown an image of the countryside between Morges and the foothills of the Jura, with family houses surrounded by vineyards, she immediately produced an image of a certain lifestyle she believes is embodied by that specific environment:

“[Photo 6] Pour moi, ça génère tout de suite des idées un peu passéistes, à savoir que la maman est à la maison, et puis elle emmène les enfants alors elle est obligée de prendre une voiture parce qu’il y a pas d’école tout près, c’est des choses qui sont tellement opposées à la vie. Ça me rappelle trop mon village, même si ça c’est en rapport avec la vigne etc. On peut imaginer une certaine qualité de vie. Ce qu’on ne montre pas, c’est peut-être les murs anti-bruit de l’autoroute qui passent à 2 km,

ou bien, je ne sais pas. Bon, je ne trouve pas ça beau, c'est-à-dire que je trouverais la nature belle s'il n'y avait pas les bâtiments, voilà. Il y a des rajouts, de rajouts de maisons, c'est des conceptions de vie qui me font un peu froid dans le dos si vous voulez. On rajoute un bout parce qu'on va prendre les enfants qui grandissent, mais on ne veut pas les laisser partir trop. On va s'occuper des petits-enfants parce que comme ça c'est plus pratique. Socio-culturellement parlant, ce n'est pas mon truc. Non, ce n'est pas beau." - Brigitte, 61, ville (campagne)

David, on the other hand, was born in Lausanne, in the popular housing blocs of the Ouchy neighbourhood. He never found much pleasure in inhabiting Lausanne, despite the fact that he founded a family and spent a big part of his career in the city. When asked to comment on a photograph of Lausanne taken from the Lemanic lake, he expressed his opinion in the following manner:

"- [Photo 5] Mais quelle horreur. Ça, c'est Lausanne. Ce mastodonte qu'on voit depuis, je ne sais plus où. Mais ça c'est voilà, un front comme ça, c'est affreux. Ça c'est le... qu'est-ce qu'ils ont construit ? C'est peut-être assez ancien. Ça c'est le truc de Georgette. (...) Non, mais parce que c'est un mélange, il n'y pas d'unité, il n'y a rien. Ça c'est moche. Ah non, je ne sais pas.

- Ça vous fait penser à quoi?

- C'est un amas d'humains qui essayent de survivre dans une ville." - David, 65, péri-urbain (ville)

In contrast, his aesthetic judgement of a picture of family houses in the countryside of the Morges and the Jura is rather positive:

"- [Photo 6] Écoutez, voilà de belles maisons, avec les vignes, l'univers construit. La maison, voilà, c'est une maison du 18ème. Vous voyez ça, par exemple, ce n'est pas très beau là derrière. La villa quelconque. En soi, elle est... je dirai rien, mais voilà, je dirai un peu. Ça, ça va. Bon c'est la nature, enfin bon la nature travaillée avec le vignoble.

- Ça, ça vous plait un peu plus?

- Oui, c'est sûr. Je ne cracherais pas si j'habite là, bien que j'aime quand même avoir, être dans un village plutôt que d'être isolé comme ça." - David, 65, péri-urbain (ville)

At the same time, he does not consider himself as being anti-urban. Rather he positions himself against both the modern heterogenous city and the urban sprawl.

"Je ne suis pas contre la ville. Non, parce que je vous ai dit, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Soleure, enfin toutes ces villes je les trouve... moi je pourrai y habiter. Mais je suis un peu étonné qu'aux extérieurs des villes, on ne construise plus des ensembles qui

pourraient créer une cité à l'extérieur. On ne fait plus que des pavés. On prend un espace comme ça puis on... pouf... une tour là. Il n'y a plus de rue. Mais ça, c'est de l'anarchie si on veut. C'est de l'anarchie. Parce que voilà, ce sont des choses construites les une derrière les autres, en fonction de l'époque." - David, 65, péri-urbain (ville)

Thus inhabiting is a concept that will allow the study of both processes of singularization and processes of uniformization. The inhabitant of a city that is upset by the constant fragmentation of his experience and the incapacity to grasp the logics of his or her environment can be put in comparison with his fellow citizen living in the periurban area who knows well the frustration coming from the paradoxal desire to achieve an organic unity with the immediate environment and to exist as a single and unique individual. One thing is sure. The city always appears to have a pivotal role: Each individual has a more or less clear idea of how the city should evolve and what it should be like. For this reason, I must repeat my agreement with Davidson (2015) that the category of the city should remain "an anchor for critical urban studies". If researchers abandon the city as an empirical and theoretical category, it could lead to a divorce between urban theory and the human experience.

"[Photo 5] Waw! C'est comblé ça. Alors beaucoup trop de choses. Un toit magnifique, ça, c'est toute la beauté. Ça, c'est le château d'Ouchy ça ? Oui. Bord du lac magnifique avec des bâtiments qui sont somptueux au bord du lac, mais tout ce qui est derrière, il y a trop, il y a beaucoup trop, et puis là, il y a vraiment pas d'espaces verts, c'est... toutes ces grues derrière, l'usine d'incinération, ça, c'est la grande ville quoi. Le bruit, le smog, la fumée, la pollution, enfin tout ce que je n'aime pas. (...) Toutes ces bâtisses qui sont les unes à côté des autres comme ça. Il y a trop, il y a beaucoup trop. Les tours, là qui ressortent comme ça, les grues... enfin, non y a... toute cette partie-là ne me plaît pas, on va dire, 60%, 70% de l'image ne me plaît pas. Mise à part le beau lac, le beau bleu, le beau ciel. Voilà. Il y a tout ça qui ne me plaît pas." - Luisa, périurbain (petite ville)

"[Photo 5] On a des choses un peu plus anciennes, un peu moins anciennes puis après on a des trucs très contemporains comme ça. C'est très urbain, ça fait très ville, très ville de maintenant. (...) Bien qu'il y ait deux trois, deux trois bâtiments un peu moches au milieu de cette, de cette ville qui est plutôt une belle ville comme ça. Je pense que si on arrive à Lausanne, je ne suis pas objective, je suis lausannoise, mais, je pense que si on arrive comme ça typiquement en bateau, comme tu disais et puis qu'on voit Lausanne, on aura plutôt tendance à dire qu'elle a un côté, un côté joli, et puis les plus réac' ils vont dire qu'il y a des verrues modernes au milieu." - Laure, 30, ville (ville)

“[Photo 11] Moi j'adore l'assemblage comme ça. Il y a des bâtiments, ben je passe de temps en temps ici, puis j'étais au gymnase ici, donc il y a des bâtiments que j'aime bien, là. Surtout sur cette rangée-là, celui-là j'adore, même si les couleurs elles sont moches, j'aime bien, je ne sais pas, il y a quelque chose. Et oui, il y a un mouvement là. Puis on voit que... ils ont rien de particulier les nouveaux bâtiments qu'ils ont fait, mais en fait, je n'avais pas vraiment vu, mais on voit qu'il y a quand même... ils suivent un mouvement. Ils ont fait l'effort de les intégrer à ce qu'il y avait déjà là. (...) Et puis y a des pavés, j'aime bien les pavés. En fait ce que j'aime bien, c'est le côté urbain en fait, les maisons collées les unes aux autres, comme ça. Qu'il n'y ait pas la même hauteur. Elles ont... elles ont le même style, mais elles sont différentes. Donc on peut déduire qu'elles ont été construites à des époques, à des moments différents. Et donc il y a une certaine histoire. Oui.” - Amir, 25, ville (ville)

The complex mechanism through which modern individuals are able to generate images of the inhabited environment is perhaps best described by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri. In their famous work “Thousand Plateaus” (1987), they argue that modern societies define themselves through processes of decoding and deterritorialization. Decoding means to conceive a certain cultural logic or societal practice and to reorder (translate) it in one manner or another. This new code is often accompanied by a strong sense of style, whose purpose is to protect the new meaning and to erase what other societies have coded and decoded. The decoding mechanism allows inhabitants to produce various aesthetic assemblages, where the relations between components are displaced and replaced according to how the subject imagines them, and how relevant the subject considers them in reference to the societal frame they consider legitimate. Since (modern) urban reality is only apprehensible in fragments, this mechanism then serves to reconstitute a sort of new coherent totality with its inner logics, spatialities and temporalities. Parts are not simply smaller than the whole; They are profoundly different. A person’s relationship to parts of a whole differs from that person’s relationship to the whole. It is up to the subject to choose which fragments are legitimate enough to enter into their aesthetic conception of the world and to overcode them, as I have previously described,⁴⁷ according to the principles of the synecdoche and asyndeton. This choice, however, seems to somehow be tied into the subject’s practical day-to-day interactions with their immediate urban environment.

As Anthony Vidler pointed out, the fragment has a double signification: “[a]s a reminder of the past one whole but now fractured and broken”; and “as an incomplete piece of a potentially complete whole” always pointing toward some “possible world” (cited in S. Jacobs 2002, 17). At the same time, changing the scale might completely alter the

meaning that is attributed to the fragments. E.g. the same house can be perceived and imagined differently depending on whether it is judged in an isolation from the objects that surround it (although one can never fully abstract an object from its surrounding environment; Indeed, aesthetic objects are always contextualized) or whether it is judged in the immediate or even a larger context. At the same time, it is the subject who chooses to neglect or reinforce one element of a given context or another. It is up to him or her to choose the referential scale that will be used as the frame for an aesthetic judgement — a frame that is never fixed, nor stable. A particularity of the aesthetic experience is precisely related to the fact that an individual is free, at least partly,⁴⁸ to imaginatively engage with the object of aesthetic attention. At the same time, any shift in perception or conception of the object necessarily changes the way one imagines that object.

Elisabeth, who lives in a single-family house in the periurban district, speaks of how the recent societal discourse concerning the downsides of the periurban lifestyle has influenced her aesthetic judgements. Her shift in aesthetic understanding did not come only by paying attention to the news media. It also followed a certain change in the way the life is organized in these areas — a change that she directly experienced. She starts by giving us a description of her immediate residential environment and later expresses her aesthetic judgment in regard to a similar neighbourhood in the Vaud region:

“- Est-ce que vous pouvez me décrire votre quartier?

- Alors, quartier de banlieue d'un tout petit village, banlieue résidentielle qui avait l'avantage très important au moment où nous nous y sommes installés d'être habité par des familles qui avaient toutes, non, la majorité avaient une composition familiale à peu près semblable, c'est-à-dire des jeunes couples avec des enfants du même âge et ça a apporté une qualité de vie vraiment excellente à ce moment-là, qui bien sûr, plus de trente ans après a complètement évoluée. On pourrait dire qu'au moment où les gens se sont installés ici, une absence totale de haies séparant les maisons, puisque c'était le moment où on les plantait, donc des contacts très faciles ce qui maintenant n'est plus le cas. Outre le fait que les gens on vieillit, beaucoup sont partis, donc il y a eu après un mouvement. Et je pense que ceux qui viennent maintenant ne retrouvent plus ce qui faisait ce charme de ces dizaines d'enfants de la même portion de rue qui jouaient ensemble et qui étaient particulièrement attrayants.” - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

“[Photo 12] - Alors ça, c'est justement ces banlieues résidentielles typiques telles qu'on les connaît chez nous, qu'on critique évidemment sous de très nombreux

⁴⁷ See the section “The Aesthetic Network: A Topology of Aesthetic Places”.

⁴⁸ See previously on the criticism of Merleau-Ponty regarding the Sartre's conception of humans as ontologically free beings.

points. D'abord la haie de thuyas qui est une aberration écologique parce qu'on limite les espèces animales qui peuvent y vivre et ensuite le fait que chacun se cache derrière. Mais si on regarde bien, les gens ne sont pas tellement cachés, les gens délimitent leur espace, mais relativement bas quand même. Quand on voit ça, alors là il y a un mélange pas possible des genres, aussi des époques visiblement, tout est un peu, villa « ça me suffit ». Bien propre. Mais là, évidemment si je fais allusion à ça, c'est que je veux parler du choix qui était de montrer la place des voitures dans ce genre d'endroits par rapport à l'autre où c'était justement le choix des transports publics. Donc là, on dirait un peu des personnes un peu plus égoïstes qui ne veulent pas partager leur espace, qui veulent un transport individuel motorisé dont c'est le passé. C'est plus ce qu'on va essayer de promouvoir parce qu'on ne peut plus se le permettre.

- Vous pensez que ça c'est le passé ?

- Oui, oui. C'est le passé. Ces cinquante dernières années, parce que ce n'est pas assez densifié.

- Mais pensez-vous que les gens ont encore envie d'y habiter ?

- Oui, bien sûr. Mais ce n'est pas ce qu'on doit faire. Mais par contre le fait que ces maisons, par rapport à d'autres qu'on a vu sur d'autres pages, sont toutes un peu différentes. Bon il y en a peut-être deux semblables, ici ou là. Peut-être celles-ci, elles sont de la même époque peut-être, ça rend cette uniformité qui peut être déplaisante. Bon, là, c'est sympathique même si ce n'est probablement pas correct urbanistiquement. Ça, j'en suis tout à fait consciente, mais...il y a aussi une diversité dans les plantations. Donc je veux dire par là que les gens ont mis quelque chose d'eux. Non, c'est bien.

- Donc quand vous réalisez ça, vous pourriez dire, oui c'est un beau paysage?

- Non, non, ce n'est pas beau. Non, pas du tout. Mais je pourrais aller y vivre. C'est très ambigu là, tout à fait. Non je pourrais tout à fait aller vivre là, mais avec peut-être un peu mauvaise conscience.

- Donc vous pensez que le fait que ce genre d'habitation ait été critiqué a influencé le fait que vous le trouviez moins beau?

- Bien sûr, oui. Tout à fait. Et puis de nouveau là, il y a pas d'œuvre architecturale, il n'y a pas de recherche." - Elisabeth, 64, périurbain (périurbain)

I can conclude, with no surprise, that interaction with other members of the society is crucial to people's evaluative and discriminatory capacities. "Evaluation is crucial to personhood." (Rescher 1990 p.10) Aesthetic judgement is evaluative, meaning that it is monitored and assessed by the judgments and behavior of others. In this sense, the beauty of any part of an inhabited environment, as an emerging property, is, to a varying degree, flexible and open to constant change, and this further depends on people's daily practices and their interactions (whether direct or mediated) with other members of society. As Steven Jacobs writes, "it is in everyday experience that an aisthesis lies hidden that could excite a sensation of beauty without needing the slightest artistic intervention"

(S. Jacobs 2002, 22). People draw on their previous experiences, but, as evaluative and historical beings, they also draw on the experiences of others. Thus, societies and spaces created by these societies are essential for people's engagement in the imaginative experience. Since a significant part of people's day-to-day spatialities take place in the urban environment, it is therefore fundamental to ask to what extent this environment affects people's capacity to see the world in an aesthetic manner.

Aesthetic Judgement Matures in the Urban Environment

Today, it seems that the word "environment" spans all scales, from the global to the local, but also all domains of human society (Lévy 2013, 342-3). Environments can be natural, industrial, built, work, domestic — they can be given as many adjectives as humans can isolate spatial substances.⁴⁹ An environment can be defined as the sum of all realities exterior to a system that are connected to and condition the functioning of different parts of that system.⁵⁰ In their daily interaction with other humans and societal objects, human actors create systems that are always incorporated into some sort of environment. Interactions between modern individuals happen in an urban environment that defines the lives not only of those who live in cities, but also of those who live in the suburbs, the periurban areas or the mountain areas. Though there are still some completely rural communities, mostly in Eastern and Southern Asia, they are on the verge of becoming included into a global urbanized system of more or less interconnected actors. To live in an urban environment means to act upon (and to be acted upon by) a spatial organization characterized by a certain degree of urbanity, which is a property that emerges from the density and double diversity⁵¹ of the components that make up the system. This density/diversity couple is not to be taken for granted. As Jane Jacobs observed, "[cities] are not like suburbs, only denser. They differ from towns and suburbs in basic ways, and one of these is that cities are, by definition, full of strangers" (Jacobs 1961), meaning that in the city, people are constantly exposed to otherness, to the different. A similar position is held by Lefebvre who understood the urban space as the simultaneity of the divergent and different, on the one hand, and the experience of the unknown, on the other (Lefebvre 1996, 129).

⁴⁹ See the section "Three Attributes of Space".

⁵⁰ See previously "The Components of a System".

⁵¹ See the section "Urbanity As Phenomenon Emerging From a Combination Of Density And Diversity".

Since the appearance of the two classical texts by Lefebvre and Jacobs, both the city and its periphery have been subjected to change. On the one hand, “the periphery has gained in color, consisting no longer exclusively of monotonous residential suburbs, shopping malls, and industrial parks. It now also harbors a wide-ranging service sector. (...) Central cities, on the other hand, have frequently fallen apart into virtually monofunctional zones, office zones, gentrified neighbourhoods, ghettos, and commercial and tourist districts that have been converted into veritable theme parks. In Europe, for the benefits of mass tourism, historical centres have been refurbished, or even transformed into an open air museum, often cancelling out almost all of the precedent urban diversity.” (Jacobs 2002, 18-9) Since everyone is constantly subjected to various mechanisms of both fragmentation and unification, I find myself tempted to study each individual with his or her “degree of singularity”, as the title of the approaching academic seminar in Cerisy⁵² references. Since the temporality of the doctoral thesis is limited, I am not in position to produce such an “identity card” for each inhabitant who agreed to participate in this study. Instead, I will terminate my analysis by drawing attention to the fundamental aesthetic judgements and sensitivities that were common to all participants of the study.

Public Space is a Space Per Excellence Where our Aesthetic Sensitivities Evolve and Mature

In her essay “City Life and Difference” (1990), the political philosopher Iris Marion Young isolates four ideals of the city, where the ideal is the “unrealized possibility of the actual”.⁵³ According to her, the four unique dynamics conducive to the formation of the city are: social differentiation without exclusion, variety, eroticism, and publicity. Social differentiation without exclusion means that heterogeneous social groups can co-exist side by side; Variety means that the various places of urban space serve several, often simultaneous, purposes. In the previous chapters, I dealt with the first two ideals. I will now focus on the last two ideals: eroticism and publicity.

As a qualifying marker of city life, Young understands the concept of eroticism in the sense of Barthes (Barthes 1986). She defines it as “the pleasure and excitement of being drawn out of one's secure routine to encounter the novel, strange and surprising”, which

⁵² In June 2017, the seminar entitled “Carte d'identités. L'espace au singulier” will be held at the “Centre Culturel International de Cerisy”, France.

⁵³ What is interesting here is that Young understands an ideal as a virtuality. If the realm of the aesthetics finds its full expression in both the actual and the virtual, it becomes tempting to say that the city can only fully realize itself in the aesthetic realm. Even if this is the case, it does not prevent the ethical from striving towards the ideal.

she finds to be a pleasure, in opposition to the security and exclusion of the homogeneous community. She describes this sensation in the following words: “We spend a Sunday afternoon walking through Chinatown, or checking out this week’s eccentric players in the park. We look for restaurants, stores, and clubs with something new for us, a new ethnic food, a different atmosphere, a different crowd of people. We walk through sections of the city that we experience as having unique characters which are not ours, where people from diverse places mingle and then go home” (Kasinitz 1995, 267). The interviewees pointed out something similar. Indeed, Urs provided an example of such an activity:

“Moi j’aime beaucoup découvrir des villes, des paysages urbains. C’est vrai, aussi, que je pense que c’est pour ça que ça m’intéresse. C’est vrai que c’est quelque chose que j’aime bien, dans des villes par exemple, partir dans des quartiers un peu plus périphériques, juste aller tâter l’ambiance, aller voir comment je les vis, ces quartiers.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

Young argues that one derives pleasure “in being drawn out of oneself to understand that there are other meanings, practices, perspectives on the city, and that one could learn or experience something more and different by interacting with them” (Kasinitz 1995, p.267). At the same time, it was hard for me not to notice that the interviewees derive pleasure from the diversity of the city’s activities only if they are capable (or perhaps willing) to perceive them as such. Otherwise they see nothing of its beauty:

“On voit que les gens ont besoin de cette nature. Il y a pas grand monde qui reste fermé. Ou alors si les gens restent enfermés chez eux, ils restent vraiment enfermés. Ils sont devant leur télé ou avec leurs jeux, ils ne vont pas vraiment en ville pour se balader. C’est mort la ville. À part le soir, les jeunes vont danser et tout ça. Mais c’est une autre vie. Il y a pas besoin d’espace, vu qu’il fait noir.” - Emilia, 57, ville (campagne)

The last ideal, publicity, brings us to the phenomenon of urban public space⁵⁴ that is a space “open to everyone, where anyone can participate in ongoing activities and discussion”. In this kind of space, “one always risks encounter with those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different opinions of different forms of life” (Kasinitz 1995, 268). The public space is a public good that acts as both a key generator and an excellent indicator of the urbanity achieved in an urban area. As a space open to everyone and shared by all urban actors, whether they be

⁵⁴ An important part of my reflections on public space come from the series of lectures held by Swiss art historian Véronique Mauron Layaz, who teaches the theory of public space and the theory of image at the EPFL.

permanent dwellers or visitors, it transforms each of them into one another's — a reason why people often (wrongly) identify equality with anonymity and mediation with alienation. Since anonymity is usually identified with a lack of individuality, it would be wrong to say that public space makes people 'nobodies'. The very substance of public space is based upon the weak ties (Granovetter 1973) that enable one's singularity to be unobtrusively perceived by others and, at the same time, it offers each urban actor a possibility to observe who the others are and how they exteriorize their own singularity through various ephemeral forms (e.g. hairstyles, make-up, gestures) as well as long-term forms (e.g., residential building facades, private cars, etc.). Behind the idea of public space lies the idea of "living together with that which is different". Although most people encounter strangers outside of the public space as well, the particularity of the public space is that its referential space is the whole of society. In addition, the serendipity, i.e., the possibility of finding what one is not looking for, increases as the publicity of urban space increases (Lévy 2004).

As "a portion of societal space within which any actor taking part can expect to experience an equivalent amount of diversity that is encountered with that portion's referential space" (Acebillo, Lévy, and Schmid 2013, 123), pure public space is only an ideal. It can never be fully actualized — but this is the case with any other social reality, including the city. The city, as an ideal of an open world that assimilates otherness, remains only partially realized, just as the ideal of community, which can never attain the full level of social transparency where everything is totally visible and legible. This is why it might be useful to speak of the intensity of public space, or the degree of publicity of urban space (Ruzicka-Rossier and Mauron 2009). Spaces such as streets, squares or parks potentially appear as spaces with a high degree of publicity, because of their societal character and free accessibility. As one moves towards more communal spaces (e.g., "ethnic" districts, worship places) or places with reserved access (communal housing, gated communities), the publicity of the urban space diminishes. At the total opposite end of the spectrum are houses, flats or automobiles, which are individual places with reserved access (Lévy 2013, 366). Since everyday life is woven into this wide range of spaces, often existing in the both the private and the public realm, people's aesthetic sensitivities develop through the various interactions they create through them. Hence, a person's style of spatiality appears crucial to the development of the aesthetic judgment. Literature, art or movies can highly influence people's aesthetic judgements, but it seems that nothing can replace a direct perceptible contact with an environment. It is therefore essential to know the difference between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, two German words that indicate two ways by which each individual can experience the world - *Erlebnis*, being related to the lived experience and *Erfahrung*, carrying a connotation of a structured knowledge (Elsaesser 2009). Aesthetic space offers each individual a chance to

freely recombine their fragmented Erlebnis-type experiences into a more solid Erfahrung-type experience.

“C’est vrai que dans l’adolescence, je me souviens, assez vite, quand je pouvais prendre le train toute seule, je pense que je devais avoir 14 ans, 15 ans, comme ça, j’adorais aller le mercredi après-midi. Je prenais le train toute seule. J’allais à Lausanne. En ville de Lausanne et je me baladais, puis j’avais l’impression « waw c’est très cool ! » Tu sais, d’être dans cette ville, j’aime beaucoup la ville en fait, je pense que je suis quand même pas mal citadine, même si j’apprécie beaucoup la nature, surtout maintenant en étant parent. Mais du coup, j’aimais bien aller au centre-ville à Lausanne, rien que de me balader dans les rues, je trouvais que ça me donnait un sentiment de liberté qui était assez prononcé, alors qu’à Vevey ou à la Tour de Peilz, le fait que ce soit petit, puis où tout le monde se connaît etc, en tout cas ado, ça me plaisait moins, quoi, j’aimais bien la grande ville, oui. Grande ville à l’échelle suisse, quoi.” - Claudia, 34, périurbain (petite ville)

“On allait tout le temps ce qu’on appelait « aller en ville ». On prenait le bus numéro 1 ou en voiture avec mon père. (...) On aimait aller dans les magasins, on allait (...) mais vous savez les loisirs de soir, on montait en ville et on faisait les vitrines. Avec mes parents et ma sœur, on avait 10 ans. C’était fermé, on faisait les vitrines, on se baladait dans la rue de Bourg, tout ce centre qui existe encore. Oui, on allait tout le temps.” - Maria, 59, ville (ville)

“C’est vrai que le fait de se confronter à un environnement très différent, par exemple à Accra, la capitale du Ghana, là ça m’a marqué, car en Suisse il y avait... déjà niveau propreté, niveau ordre, et ça, ça a influencé quand même passablement la beauté du lieu. Dans le sens où il y avait des quartiers à Accra qui étaient très... très très délabrés, très délaissés, avec des... je ne sais pas... des pneus, des matériaux de construction et ça, ça dégradait vraiment fortement l’esthétique du lieu. Et ça, c’est vrai que je ne l’avais pas vu en Suisse. (...) Je pense que j’ai pas mal jugé, mais, en même temps, comme c’était nouveau, je pense que j’avais aussi envie de faire partie, disons, de ce décor-là et puis de trouver beau, finalement, peut-être quelque chose que j’aurais pas trouvé beau avec mon point de vue suisse, oui. Par exemple, il y avait des magasins — ça m’a marqué — des magasins de cercueils, avec des cercueils, mais vraiment des formes... oui, incroyables : en forme de fusée, ou bien de voiture de course, qui étaient exposés dans une espèce de petit hangar un peu délabré, pas très joli, mais disons il y avait ce contraste avec ces cercueils qui brillaient, magnifiques, et puis ce hangar complètement usé et puis je me suis dit "ah oui, ça c’est attirant, c’est joli à voir, c’est beau". Alors que c’était... ce hangar, je l’aurais pas du tout trouvé attirant autrement.” - Martin, 22, ville (ville)

“Encore hier, je suis passée avec une copine au parc de Milan, vous voyez ou c’est ? Puis, je regarde à gauche et je dis « Mais ce n’est pas possible ! » Ma copine me dit

« Ils ont mis une usine. » Je lui dis : « Non, regarde, c'est des appartements ». Puis il y a la maison de maître qui est collée juste derrière et puis il y a deux petits bâtiments, il doit y avoir, je ne sais pas, quatre appartements ou je ne sais pas combien, ces machins tous carrés, tous blancs, tous serrés entre la route, la maison de maître, puis le parc et puis... je me suis dit « mais pourquoi ils ont mis ça là ? » Je ne sais pas. » - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

« Mais en fait, ce que j'aime bien, j'aime beaucoup les maisons. Je me balade beaucoup, je regarde beaucoup les maisons. Et j'habite dans un endroit où il y a énormément de... je n'ai pas de villa mais il y a tout autour beaucoup de villas. Il y a juste des villas, juste incroyables, et puis je suis très sensible à l'esthétique des maisons. » - Daniela, 43, périurbain (banlieue)

A lack of interaction with the public space might lead to negative aesthetic understandings. This is the case with Thomas who grew up in a single-family house in the countryside without ever developing a particular interest for big cities.

« - J'ai grandi en étant beaucoup dehors, en faisant beaucoup d'activités à l'extérieur aussi. L'école était beaucoup dans la nature et du coup j'allais peut-être une fois par mois dans une plus grande ville, mais tu restes beaucoup lié aux espaces peu peuplés, et je ne dirais pas, mais je ne suis pas habitué aux grandes villes.

- Et tu te souviens ces voyages dans de grandes villes ? Comment tu les a vécu ?

- D'une part, tu étais impressionné parce que tu disais chaque fois : c'est grand. Il y a beaucoup de monde, tu es impressionné d'une partie ou de l'autre. Et de l'autre part, tu es un peu, je ne sais pas si effrayé est le bon mot ? Mais tu es effrayé par tout ce gris, je trouve souvent. Cet effet que tu as dans la ville. D'une part c'est grand et impressionnant et, en même temps, d'une manière ou de l'autre, un peu triste. Parce que c'est souvent, je lie cela souvent au fait de se trouver pas important et dans un espace énormément gris. C'est souvent l'impression que j'avais.

- Tu habites une ville depuis combien d'années ?

- Depuis deux ans et demi.

- Est-ce que tu as changé ?

- Je pense que tu deviens moins choqué par la ville. Tu t'y habitue plus, et tu apprends à voir de petites beautés qu'il y a quand même dans une ville, mais de là à dire que je me sens cent pour cent à l'aise dans une grande ville, quand même pas. Tu apprends à trouver de petites beautés qu'il y a aussi dans la ville, par rapport à la nature, mais à ce point-là dire que je trouve la ville plus belle, ou que l'impression a changé, je ne pense pas quand même. » - Thomas, 25, ville (campagne)

It seems that prolonged exposure to certain urban environments can lead to the shift in the way these environment are aesthetically experienced. Again, the problem of distinction between the concept of inhabiting and the concept of residing imposes as

fundamental. One can spend his or her entire life in an environment without really actively inhabiting it. A stone lying in water for years — it still can end up dry inside.

“- Donc pour moi un immeuble, ça fait un peu l’effet d’une montagne, quand c’est trop proche. (...)

- Et ça vient d’où ?

- Ah ! Alors ça je pense que ça vient certainement de mes ancêtres, parce que nous sommes paysans de famille, et je sais que, nous, on était les paysans qui habitaient la ville. Moi je suis née à Lausanne, je suis née en ville, donc j’ai des manières de ville, bien sûr. Ils avaient une maison, il n’y avait pas de salle de bain. Ils avaient pas ce genre de confort dont nous on avait l’habitude. Mais au-delà du confort, moi j’étais super bien quand j’allais en vacances parce que j’avais de l’espace, parce que c’était des choses qu’en ville, on était un peu cloisonnés quand même. (...) Je suis née toujours dans le sud de Lausanne. Mais le sud-ouest. Et là on avait, encore une fois, de l’espace, parce qu’il y avait à côté de chez nous une forêt. On appelait ça les ruclons en fait, à l’époque, parce que les gens déversaient, dans certains endroits, les déchets. Il y avait pas encore les déchetteries, ça n’existait pas, donc les gens jetaient un peu comme ça. Donc on vivait à côté des ruclons, mais pas dans le ruclon. Nous, on jouait avec la nature, avec les arbres, on faisait des cabanes, après ils ont fait l’exposition nationale. (...) Le lieu, il avait quand même quelque chose de bien, c’était qu’on avait un petit jardin. Donc on avait un petit espace de verdure où on pouvait aller manger ou mettre la piscine pour les enfants. Une ! Il n’y en a qu’une qui a connu, qui est née là-bas, les autres sont nés ici. (...)

J’ai de la peine à me projeter en ville, alors que j’habite en ville. Ça a été toute ma vie quand même, la ville. Mais c’est vrai quand on va regarder avec mon mari, on s’est plutôt dirigé sur le Valais, en haut plutôt, en montagne, pas en plaine.” - Emilia, 57, ville (bord de ville).

In contrast, Urs, after being exposed to diverse stylistic expressions in the city of Lausanne, modified his judgement to aesthetically experience the city’s streets and city’s architecture in a new light:

“Mais ça, je pense que c’est lié aussi un peu, je pense aussi au goût de mes parents. Moi j’aimais surtout les villes historiques, mais avec des centres historiques anciens, homogènes et puis c’est vrai qu’à ce niveau-là, bien Bâle ou Berne, c’est quand même des villes qui sont plus belles que Lausanne, franchement. C’est vrai que moi, Lausanne, c’était une ville que je trouvait plutôt moche et puis surtout qu’on arrivait par la gare. Je veux dire la place de la gare immonde, après...pour ça d’ailleurs je la trouve toujours assez moche, ça...je n’ai pas changé. Et puis c’est vrai qu’il y a des endroits horribles. Il y a plein de trucs comme ça que je trouve très, quoi qui sont quand même assez ratés. Puis après c’est vrai que, c’est...oui, c’est vrai que j’ai découvert plus tard en fait, vraiment en y habitant puis c’est là que j’ai

réalisé ce qu'elle avait aussi de beau. (...) Des rues que je trouvais immondes quoi quand je suis arrivé ici, que j'aimais vraiment pas du tout et puis maintenant, je trouve que c'est plutôt une architecture intéressante. (...) Là je suis juste un peu sorti de catégories reçues avec lesquelles j'ai grandi en fait.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

The two last examples point out another crucial element in the development of aesthetic sensitivity — the childhood environment, which is still a largely unmapped terrain. In human geography, a large subdiscipline focusing on children and young people was developed (Kraftl, Horton, and Tucker 2014; for a basic literature review in urban studies see Ellen and Turner 1997). Geographers who focused on children's geography put an emphasis on the central role of space by calling attention to the reality that the social constructions of childhood are always spatial constructions too.

Childhood as a Critical Period

As Pauline von Bonsdorff observes, “[if] there is one area where the view of children as inferior and/or deficient beings has been less dominant, this might be the area of aesthetics” (2009, 60). Among the first thinkers who called into question the view that children are inferior to adults in all aspects was Rousseau. In the mid-18th century, childhood began to be viewed in a positive light, as a highly emotional state of freedom, creativity and, perhaps most importantly, of ‘innocence’ and ‘incorruption’. Interestingly enough, the discipline of modern aesthetics was created during at the same period.

Here again I must again insist on not to confuse the aesthetic and the artistic. Since art is usually seen as a serious matter reserved for adults with high cognitive abilities and certain social capital, then when it comes to artistic issues, children can only appear as less knowledgeable and less experienced. If, however, aesthetics is considered as a dimension of society that influences the human experience of the world as well as the societal values and qualities that we give to social objects, then it appears that children are not only aesthetically active, but in many ways, perhaps even more active than adults. The two philosophers who put a strong emphasis on this fact were Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard.

While he was a professor of child psychology and pedagogy at the Sorbonne, Merleau-Ponty dealt extensively with the phenomenology of the childhood. In his series of lectures from 1949 to 1952 (Merleau-Ponty 2001), he argued that the the child's experience of others is critical for any systematic attempt to understand individual and intersubjective existence. Since his discussions included an extraordinary range of topics

and references from various fields, I will primarily focus on the first and last lecture where he discusses the child's relationship to language. Like von Bonsdorff (2009), I believe that a proper understanding of the mechanism by which a child acquires a language will provide us with a better understanding of the development of aesthetic judgement.

In his discussion of language acquisition, Merleau-Monty describes language as a space that comes from the order of the subject. He criticises the philosophical perspective that sees language as coming from the order of things. He argues that in the view of Descartes, Kant, and so forth, "spoken or written words are" considered as "physical phenomena; the connection between word's meaning and aspect is accidental, fortuitous, and conventional. (...) Language is an uttered message, but one without the force of effective communication. The word has no power of its own." (Merleau-Ponty and Welsh 2010, 3). Merleau-Ponty argues that this conception devalues language because it turns it into a ready-made object. For him, a word is not a mere sign whose purpose is to give the mind "an occasion to remember what he already knows". The word does not only summarize what already exists. Instead, he claims that language brings something to thought. Words are not just neutral signs, so "[l]anguage defies the sign-signified distinction". Here is a similar criticism as that aimed at Sartre's theory of imagination and the role of the analogon for the imaginative thought.

In acquiring its first language, a child does not merely interpret a phonetic system, but rather enters a space of sounds and appropriates its phonetic characteristics, which Merleau Ponty calls register or "style" of a language. This means that "the child learns the differences between phonetic units of a language in a functional way, through use and situations, not through logical inference. Learning takes place through doing, testing, playing." (Bonsdorff 2009) The immediate environment and the spatialities of a child appear as essential for the process of language acquisition. "Language is the indissoluble extension of all physical activity and at the same time is something new in relation to it. Speech emerges from the "total language" made up of gestures, mimicry, and so forth. But language transforms." (Merleau-Ponty and Welsh 2010, 8) Play is here, as von Bonsdorff points out, more than intellectual gaming, for it fully activates the realm of imagination and emotions. Merleau-Ponty compares a child's play with language with an actor's relation to his role:

"We can ask here, as with all games, to what extent does the child believe in the reality of imaginary situations? (...) But Sartre in *The Imaginary* shows that this is a false problem. The child, like the actor, is neither feigning nor is he in an illusion. He has left the plane of habitual life for an oneiric life

that he really lives. He renders himself unreal [s'irrealise] in the role.”
(Merleau-Ponty and Welsh 2010, 35)

By playing with language, a child extends his/her behavior, which in turn appears as a manifestation of his/her imaginary life. This means that the process of language acquisition is highly aesthetic — a child takes up elements from the world and in the act of play combines them in a new way.

The concept of play has an important place in aesthetic tradition. Like Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer took the Kantian emphasis on play and made it a cornerstone of his own aesthetic theory. He gave to the concept of play two elements that were missing in the Kantian conception: a historical dimension, and a strong emphasis on actual movement in the world that “invites” us to engage in aesthetic experience. He dismissed the idea that aesthetic judgment comes as a result of the free play of cognitive faculties, but retained the idea that the aesthetic experience is characterized by a free spontaneous structure, which cannot be expressed in the form of general laws but is nevertheless organized (Gjesdal 2012, 104-8). The main problem with the Kantian understanding of subjectivity was that it appeared as autonomous — as a result of the subject’s brain activity only. Gadamer (1989, 102), in contrast, observed that when the ordinary use of the word “play” is closely examined, the limitations of the Kantian perspective quickly become apparent. When one speaks of the play of waves or the light, one does not refer to the mental state of the observer, but to the actual movement of the waves and light itself. The aim of this play “consists in the maintenance of the movement itself” (Gjesdal 2012, 107). As Kristin Gjesdal observes, Gadamer was drawing on the work of the Dutch anthropologist Johan Huizinga, whose study “*Homo Ludens*” (1938), pointed out that play is closely related to the emergence of human culture. “Play expresses a dimension of life that transcends the constraints of reproduction and natural needs. It is related to our most fundamental quest for existential meaning” (Gjesdal 2012, 107). In religious rites and festivals, which were described by Huizinga, Gadamer finds proof of human beings’ natural necessity to lose themselves in play, to be absorbed by the movement of play. According to Gjesdal, this is what makes the model of play a starting point for an account of the aesthetic experience.⁵⁵ Movement seems to appear at the threshold of every aesthetic experience.

By lending its sensing body to the world, a child learns to imagine and eventually learns to change the world into drawings, plays and role-changing games. Since a child is perpetually engaged in play, a child inhabits the virtual (the possible) more than an adult

⁵⁵ It must be noted that Gadamer was primarily concerned with the experience of art.

does.⁵⁶ When Paul Klee copied a landscape painted by his 12-year-old son into his own 1920 painting entitled "Untitled (Tent City in the Mountains)", he paid tribute to the creativity and inventiveness of childhood. Similar to Klee, other artists like Miró, Dubuffet and Picasso used art made by children (primarily for their novel way of looking at the world) as a source for their own aesthetic innovations (see Fineberg 1997)

Since humans, as socially prematured beings, are naturally predispositioned for social interaction, a child cannot develop its linguistic capacities nor its sensibility without synthesizing various lived experiences with other humans (Lahire 2016, 54). If human beings' social capacities develop through direct interactions with an environment, this must be true for their aesthetic representations too. If a person's aesthetic judgment, as a result of unique imaginative activity, is to be awoken and enriched to the extent of being singular, this can only happen if a child grows in active interaction with other members of society (parents, friends, teachers, but also strangers in the streets and other urban spaces!). This brings to light the intersubjective and evaluative character of aesthetic judgment — a characteristic that was actually suggested by Kant in his discussions of taste and *sensus communis*.⁵⁷

In the same way that "[t]he child's movement toward speech is a constant call to others", aesthetic judgment demands the constant adjustment and approval of the others. "The child recognizes in the other another self". (Merleau-Ponty and Welsh 2010, 20) A child is open to the world — rather than being centred on itself. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty argues for the contrary interpretation of the famous thesis of Piaget as regards to young children's 'egocentrism'. "Rather than being too much occupied with itself, the young child is characterised by a lack of ego, a world-openness and an accompanying tendency not to put boundary between 'myself' and the other. While this world-openness may take many forms and go through many stages, it is worth observing that it points to the sharing of meaning — in situations of play and language use, and in interpreting or understanding, and producing meaning." (Bonsdorff 2009, 67) Like language, aesthetic judgement appears as the means of realizing "reciprocity with the other" (Merleau-Ponty and Welsh 2010, 20).

⁵⁶ It might be argued that an important part of a child's social education consists precisely in suppressing the imaginative element of experience, in order for a child to enter a certain cultural scheme.

⁵⁷ As von Bonsdorff points out, "[i]t should however be emphasised that this theoretical, assumed shareability differs in decisive ways from the much more empirical and heterogeneous situations Merleau-Ponty seems to have in mind. Whereas Kant's focus is on aesthetic judgement, Merleau-Ponty's is on experience. In different ways both however deal with the constitution of a common human world (2009)".

The fundamental importance of childhood was evoked by almost all of the interviewees. When asked to comment on how their aesthetic judgement has come to be as such, it seems to me that their responses can be summarized by the following words of Ivo Andrić, a Bosnian Nobel Prize laureate for literature: “At the beginning of all roads and paths, at the basis of the very thought of them, lies sharply and indelibly carved the path on which I made my first free steps (translated by L. Pašćanović)” Here are some of the examples:

“Je rêvais ces maisons, de vivre là. Ça serait tellement chouette de vivre au bord du lac. Mais ça me paraissait inaccessible. Ça s'est donné, il y a une dizaine d'années plus tard. Donc il y a très longtemps. Ce qui participe aussi, comme enfant, j'ai passé toutes mes vacances d'été dans une cabane de pêcheurs, des planches en bois, et on y passait six semaines d'été. Cet enracinement là, comme enfant, participe de l'envie d'avoir choisi un endroit comme celui-là.” - Walter, 60, périurbain

“- Les grandes villes m'auraient plutôt fait fuir. Beaucoup de bruit, beaucoup de circulation, ce genre de choses je n'aime pas trop. Bon étant petite, je n'allais pas souvent non plus dans les grandes villes. Mais si j'y restais avec mes parents, on allait à Genève rendre visite à ma tante ou des choses comme ça. Je n'aimais pas du tout les grandes villes. J'étais bien dans mon petit village. Et encore maintenant, voyez, on a choisi un village et non pas une ville. J'ai vécu à Lausanne. On était un petit peu excentrés vers la forêt, vers le lac de Sauvabelin. Je n'avais pas le sentiment d'être en pleine ville. Mais je n'aurais jamais pu être en pleine ville. Mais peut-être parce que j'ai toujours vécu dans un endroit qui fait plus villageois que grande ville.
- Qu'est-ce que la ville vous fait au niveau esthétique?
- Ça aurait plus tendance à me stresser. Tous ces bâtiments les uns après les autres, pas d'espace, pas assez de couleurs. Oui, ce n'est pas quelque chose qui me plaît.” - Luisa, 42, périurbain (petite ville)

“Comment mon gout s'est fabriqué ? Vous posez... c'est quasiment la psychanalyse. Écoutez, moi je pense que mon gout s'est fabriqué une part à l'opposé quand même du milieu d'où je suis né, car c'est un milieu extrêmement défavorisé. Il n'y avait pas beaucoup de belles choses autour de moi. Enfin, je n'ai rien trouvé, si vous voulez, à part un meuble de mon arrière-grand-père, ce qu'on appelle des secrétaires. Comme ça, il n'y avait rien à retenir. J'avais un oncle qui mêlait des anciens meubles. C'est vrai, quand j'étais gamin, bah, il avait une belle chambre. Parce qu'il collectionnait des meubles, disons de brocante, mais de qualité. Bon. C'était quand même pas des meubles d'antiquaires. Donc là, je me suis un peu fait à ce type de meuble. Mais il n'habitait pas non plus, il n'avait pas beaucoup d'argent non plus. Ils n'habitaient pas dans un château, mais il avait du goût pour l'endroit où il était.” - David, 65, périurbain (ville)

“Ben ça commence depuis tout petit forcément, parce que d'abord on a un environnement, on connaît pas autre chose donc forcément, voilà, après on commence à aller voir un peu ce qui se passe et puis on peut comparer avec son environnement, avec, ou alors, mais je pense que là où on vit au départ façonne quand même pas mal la suite, si on a eu un environnement qui nous a plu petit, peut-être qu'on a envie de retrouver les mêmes sensations, si on a eu un environnement plutôt qu'on aimait moins, on a envie de se construire ailleurs.” - Silvia, 55, périurbain (périurbain)

“- Comment votre gout s'est fabriqué ?

- Depuis la naissance. J'habitais en Angleterre dans une forêt, dans un grand hôtel. Quand je suis venu là, dans l'appartement, ça m'a quand même manqué beaucoup. (...) On passait tout notre temps dans le forêt. En hiver, mon père avait un énorme jardin. Moi j'ai vécu une vie très naturelle. Proche de la nature. Alors c'est pour ça qu'ici maintenant j'adore et j'ai la chance d'avoir continué.” - Victoria, 59, périurbain (hypourbain)

Like Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard finds the source of inhabiting in childhood, which is a period for learning to spontaneously daydream (Lévy 2013, 118). Within the childhood home, he argues, a person experiences how to be (and how to become!) themselves. A house is a human existential, oneiric and cosmic space, and it is through active imagination that one gives meaning to a life. He sees the house as a shelter where one can dream in peace. Bachelard's felicitous space is often compared with Heidegger's existential space and his nostalgic writings on the subject of dwelling. An example of this can be found in the description of a peasant hut in the Black Forest, in the final chapters of his essay “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” (1971). Both authors give „importance to a home which is built to reflect all stages of the human life – from birth to death – by including spaces both for the child's crib and the coffin as well as the areas for daily adult activity.“ (Jacobson 2009, 363). This attitude is understood as a response to the modern urbanism of the 20th century.

Henry Lefebvre, who admired both authors, writes in *The Production of Space* of “the terrible urban reality which the twentieth century has instituted, embellishing it with a nostalgic aura while also suffusing the work of its critics. Thus both Heidegger's and Bachelard's writings — the importance and influence of which are beyond question — deal with this idea in a most emotional and indeed moving way.” Victoria speaks of her relationship to both childhood and modernity in the following way:

“- Pourquoi l'ancien vous plait beaucoup plus que le tout nouveau ?

- Je crois peut-être c'est la ressemblance à l'enfance où j'ai habité. Et puis, il n'a aucun caractère. Et tout de suite je suis attiré par le bois. L'enfance était comme ça

et puis maintenant, tous nos chalets et tout ce qu'on a construit, c'est toujours avec le bois, le bois, le bois. C'est pour ça que les fleurs, le bois, les balcons, ça me plaît.”
- Victoria, 59, périurbain (hypourbain)

Once again, it seems that there is no necessity to be nostalgic. Nor is there any reason to restrain our analysis to the family home, as Bachelard did. Human beings can potentially inhabit the entire urban space, and the inhabitants in my study clearly showed that their judgements span the entire spectre of environments.

“Alors j'habitais dans une petite maison familiale qui ressemblait à un chalet de montagne, donc tout en bois. Mais ma famille avait la chance, enfin, d'avoir un petit terrain et donc j'ai eu la chance d'avoir un jardin, d'avoir donc de la verdure tout autour de chez moi. Et puis, j'étais en périphérie de Lausanne, j'habitais Prilly. Donc oui, avec un petit jardin, donc, j'allais manger des fruits dans mon jardin, j'avais un pommier enfin, un poirier, enfin, vraiment j'ai eu une enfance très proche de la nature malgré qu'on était à côté de la ville. Je pense que j'étais privilégiée donc peut-être que ça, ça a influencé, après comme je vous disais, j'aime beaucoup la nature enfin les choses... j'ai besoin d'être proche de la nature, donc je pense que oui. Si on a toujours eu l'habitude d'être dans un coin bétonné après ça se développe sûrement différemment. Mais c'est vrai que moi, pour qu'un endroit soit beau pour moi, j'ai besoin de la nature, donc je pense que oui, quand j'étais petite, j'ai été influencée. J'ai eu la chance de pouvoir vivre dans un endroit comme ça donc, oui.” - Sara, 48, ville (campagne)

“Ce qui est bizarre, c'est que, par exemple, l'est de Lausanne, ne m'attire pas du tout. J'ai pas du tout l'envie d'aller habiter là-bas dans ce coin-là. Je suis toujours attirée par l'ouest de Lausanne, et c'est drôle par ce que je ne suis pas la seule. Il y'a plein de gens qui préfèrent ce côté-là, et Lausanne apparemment c'est un peu la frontière. (...) J'ai toujours préféré ce côté, alors peut être parce que je suis née ici, que j'ai mis la tâche ici, etc., mais ça, c'est marrant.” - Chantal, périurbain (campagne)

“- Comment ton goût s'est fabriqué ?

- Je pense que c'est l'habitude depuis tout petit de vivre dans ce milieu.

- Tu penses que l'enfance joue beaucoup d'importance ?

- Oui. Après ça n'empêche pas que si on me met ailleurs, je vais peut-être trouver un autre décor très beau, mais... peut-être si je n'étais pas né ici, je verrais le village différemment. Je le trouverais moins beau, j'y trouverais plus de défauts peut-être. (...) Comme enfant, j'allais très peu en ville. Même adolescent, j'aimais mieux être dans la campagne avec mon papa que d'aller au cinéma ou de me promener en ville. Je passais le temps plutôt avec mes cousins qui habitaient à côté, faire des

cabanes en foret que d'aller dans les magasins ou jouer aux jeux vidéo.” - Patrick,
34, village (village)

By interacting with others, human beings learn how to imagine. Aesthetic education consists precisely in the transmission of one's own images to others. Influenced by the works of the American School of Cultural Sociology, Merleau-Ponty saw childhood as “an initiation into a certain cultural environment” (Merleau-Ponty and Welsh 2010, 20). Some straight parallels can be made between his position and Bourdieu's term ‘habitus’, understood as “the set of dispositions that individuals acquire through socialization, particularly early life, and which orient them towards the social and physical world around them” (Sayer cited in Wan 2011, 82). Barbara and Maria point out the role of parents when their children are young:

“Les premiers qui vous font la différence entre jolie et pas joli - quand vous avez 4 ans, un pull, un jouet — c'est les parents.” - Maria, 59, ville (ville)

“Ah, mais mon goût, j'avais un papa artiste et voilà, il me montrait les belles choses. Même si, je ne sais pas moi, le tableau d'un peintre que, bien peut-être qu'il ne trouvait pas terrible, mais il disait toujours : « Oui, mais tu vois là, ce qu'il a fait là, ça c'est intéressant, regarde comme c'est beau. » Donc voilà. Donc j'ai été entraînée comme ça, de voir aussi, même s'il y a une beauté partielle, bien voir ce qui est beau aussi.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

What seems to be the particularity of childhood is that children engage in collective meaning-making, much more than adults do (Kennedy 2012, 174-251). This leads von Bonsdorff to conclude that “the child existence is therefore more one of Mitsein, of being-with-others, than of self centredness. For the child, in a shared situation there is not one centre, but two or several — as many as there are participating agents” (2009). Since humans get their first conceptions of who “the others” are at an early age, one must not forget that “the other” is also an aesthetic category. “The other” is never a self-evident concept. It must always be constructed through a process of a meaning-making. It is in interaction with others that human beings learn who others are and what they are like.

As Helen Levitt observes in the opening of her short movie entitled “In the Street”, which brilliantly captured the street life in New York's Spanish Harlem during the 1940s, the urban space takes the role of a theater and a battleground, where “every human being is a poet, a masker, a warrior, a dancer: and in his innocent artistry, he projects, against the turmoil of the street, an image of human existence”. One need only pay attention to a children's chalk drawings and messages on the streets and walls (see

Levitt and Agee 1987), to see how children perpetually engage in creation of ephemeral forms of art, which lay there as a testimony of their emerging individuality and imaginative consciousness. Their drawings are not a matter of a self-centered individual. Rather they are expressions of someone willing to share with others how the world might be and might appear to them.

The point here is that childhood always takes part in the mechanisms that structure individual lives and is not merely a step that has to be conquered towards adulthood. The spaces of childhood stay with us even when we become adults. “The aesthetics of childhood is not just about children, but about the human situation.” (Bonsdorff 2009, 74) A 2009 study of the residential choice in the periurban districts in Quebec (Fortin and Després 2009) indicated that when it comes to the living environment, inhabitants seek elements they were familiar with during their childhood in low-density suburbs or rural communities. Proximity to nature and the appreciation of natural landscapes seem to play a determining role in their choices. The authors conclude that an approach based on purely economic grounds and planning using only a rational basis is destined to fail. They highlight the need for more qualitative research about residential representations, which would complement and complete quantitative studies about residential choices.

In the following paragraphs, Claudia, who is 34 years old, explains how she grew up in an apartment in a small city of the Tour de Pailz near the Lemanic lake. She first expresses her admiration for high-standing single-family houses in the residential neighbourhood, and then tells us that as a young girl, when she was in third grade, she was impressed by the beauty of the houses where her school friends lived. She had a similar feeling in relation to her grandparents’ house in Austria, where she used to spend her summer holidays. I have chosen to cite almost the entire passage on the matter for it points out to a certain consistency of an image during a lifetime:

“- [Photo 2] C’est magnifique. C’est des villas. Il y a pratiquement des villas de maîtres. Ça serait un peu ma villa, ma maison de rêve, un peu comme celle-là, dans le genre. Si je pouvais me permettre.

- Pourquoi ?

- Parce que je trouve que si l’intérieur peut être rénové tout en gardant le charme de l’ancien... C’est des maisons avec souvent des hauts plafonds, des beaux parquets, des moulures, je trouve que ça a énormément de cachet. Le style, je trouve que c’est hyper beau comme maison. Après j’aime aussi beaucoup les trucs modernes. (...) Elles sont un peu grandes, mais je trouve magnifiques. Et oui, je trouve toutes ces maisons-là sont vraiment magnifiques : là avec le lierre c’est beau, et puis la vue sur le lac, c’est joli, quoi.

- Pourquoi tu penses que c’est un beau paysage ? Pourquoi les maisons te plaisent ?

- Je trouve que c'est un mélange entre la nature, les arbres. C'est très vert, et puis au milieu c'est déjà... c'est quartier résidentiel. C'est huppé, là-bas. Voilà, les maisons sont belles. Elles sont bien entretenues. C'est pas la zone HLM, quoi. Pour moi c'est l'inverse, c'est vraiment le côté plutôt chic, super beau, ça fait un peu rêver, même si je pense qu'à moins de gagner à loterie ! (...) On est dans le rêve, mais voilà je trouve que les maisons sont très jolies. Belles couleurs, j'adore avec ces petites tuiles, c'est vraiment des magnifiques toits aussi. Les couleurs, ça me plaît. Ces volets bleus, les maisons blanches, c'est super joli, celle-là où aussi, ça m'a toujours fait... Oui, j'avais une copine qui habitait dans une maison un peu comme ça, je me souviens, j'étais devant sa maison et puis ça me faisait rêver, quoi. Petite, si tu veux. Donc c'est vrai que j'ai toujours bien aimé ces maisons comme ça. Et puis ben je trouve que c'est un joli quartier. Oui je pense que ça doit être assez agréable la vie là-bas, quoi. Enfin, à vivre en tout cas.

- Quand tu me parles de cette copine, pourquoi ça t'évoque tout de suite ce souvenir ?

- Oui, parce qu'elle avait une maison comme ça. Mais c'est vrai que j'ai toujours été attirée par les belles maisons. J'adore me balader, regarder sur les bâtiments, plus que le reste, donc, du coup... Elle, elle avait cette maison, et ça me faisait rêver. Je me disais « Mais waw ! C'est trop de chance d'habiter dans une telle maison ». J'avais une autre copine qui habitait dans une autre maison, c'était aussi, ça vous faisait rêver. Sa maison, l'autre, elle était au bord du lac. C'est une maison plus petite, mais tu sais vraiment à deux pas du port de la Tour de Pailz. C'est juste magnifique. (...) C'est vrai probablement parce que moi, j'habitais dans un appartement qui était, rien de très spécial, si tu veux, en tant que tel, et d'avoir ça, c'était un peu un rêve, quoi. Et puis je trouve qu'esthétiquement elles sont belles, quoi.

- Et pourquoi tu penses que cette petite maison était mieux qu'un appartement ?

- J'imagine que c'était bien plus grand, spacieux et... (...) C'était une petite maison, façon de dire, elle avait quand même un ascenseur dans la maison, c'était plus petit dans le sens des plafonds moins hauts, comme ça. Moi j'étais petite, je devais être en troisième primaire, donc... Tu vois c'était... Mais, c'est vrai que, oui je trouvais qu'elle avait énormément de cachet, cette maison avait une âme, vraiment. Et puis, elle était vraiment hyper bien située au bord du lac, pratiquement, elle avait une super terrasse, vue sur le lac, c'était aussi vraiment pas mal, agréable, quoi. Puis du coup j'allais assez souvent chez elle, c'était ma meilleure amie, et puis du coup, je me sentais super bien dans sa maison. J'étais vraiment là « Oh ! J'aimerais trop avoir une maison comme ça ! » Donc, et puis, voilà, c'est vrai que ça, quand tu me demandais tout à l'heure qu'est-ce qui a fait que je suis là maintenant, par rapport à mes goûts, je ne dirais pas que c'était déterminant ces moments-là, mais j'ai l'impression que depuis toute petite, j'avais ce goût pour les jolies maisons, quoi, si tu veux. Mais peut-être, parce que c'est pas ce que j'avais chez moi, dans ma famille. Mais le fait d'avoir une maison, c'est vrai que j'aimais bien. Dans ma famille en Autriche, mon père est autrichien, et quand

on allait en vacances là-bas, mes grands-parents chez qui on logeait, ils avaient une grande maison. Je trouvais ça génial d'habiter dans une maison par rapport à un appartement, en fait. Le fait, je sais pas, d'avoir plusieurs étages, le fait d'avoir ou d'être indépendant, de ne pas avoir des voisins, voilà.” - Claudia, 34, périurbain (petite ville)

Childhood appears as a critical period where aesthetic structure is awoken by the relationship that the child creates with societal objects and other persons. It is in childhood that human beings first learn to become both bounded to and separate from each other, and this is also true for aesthetic bounds and aesthetic separations. Urban science researchers still need to study how the imaginative potential of humans is activated and patterned by its interactions with urban environments, and by interactions within urban environments.

“Living Here and Not Elsewhere”: The Aesthetic Dimension of the Residential Choice

The European Environmental Agency suggests that where unplanned, decentralized development dominates, sprawl will occur in a mechanistic way (Uhel 2006). This might be true, but it presupposes that inhabitants desire to live in such an environment and this desire is far from being a universally shared value. It is important to understand why some individuals see chaos and disorder where others see beauty and liveliness. By closely analysing the participants' discourses I have concluded that adopting a new style of inhabiting usually comes with a shift in a person's aesthetic understanding of the urban environment. Again, this is not a recent phenomenon.

In the 1970s, during the time that ecological issues were emerging, there was a strong demand for habitats to be increasingly moved away from the city, i.e, for habitats to be in proximity to natural environment. Cheap gasoline and massive transport structures may have aided the construction and popularization of periurban areas, but I argue that this movement from the city to the periphery could not be accomplished without the emergence of a particular aesthetic sensibility. Studies performed in Switzerland between 1970 and 1980 indicate that among the first reasons for moving to the periphery of the city were urban annoyances and a wish to live in the country (Longchamp 1989). Salomon Cavin observes a paradox here: City exodus results in an urban sprawl, which in turn, provokes anti-urban attitudes (Salomon Cavin 2005, 75). It seems that a lifestyle

change comes with a change in almost every dimension that orients individual choices, and this is certainly true with the aesthetic dimension.

In a recent collection of essays edited by Pierre Frankhauser and Dominique Ansel, a group of authors argued that the preferences for one residential location over another are not fixed; they may change throughout life. They underline the importance of experience in the various places that people live, which enables individuals to progressively refine their choices. They further argue that the existing literature on residential modes underlines the importance of understanding what does it mean to adopt a certain lifestyle, which seems to boil down to the spatio-temporal dimension and its economic implications (Frankhauser and Ansel 2016, 57). This seems to be true in the Swiss context as well, as Thomas and Pattaroni have argued in their study of the middle-class families' residential choice (2012). An important international literature (for a review, see Aragonés 2002) has demonstrated that all stages in life bear the potential for change: "leaving the parents' home, sharing with a partner or otherwise, joining the labor market or changing jobs, having children, getting divorced, children leaving home, retiring, or simply growing old, and so on" (Frankhauser and Ansel 2016, 57). Since all these situations require of an individual to modify his or her spatialities, it may entail changes in the way his/her everyday life is practiced and organized. While factors that prompt people to change their residential environment are quite well identified, factors that make them hesitate to leave seem to be less well known.

In any case, the level of urbanity that an individual inhabits (actually as well as virtually) must always be taken into consideration. When it comes to a choice between a detached house or a collective dwelling in the French context, the above-mentioned group of authors underline a decisive role of the perception of density. Following the 2007 study for the French "Observatoire de la ville" (Gault and Bedeau) the authors observed the contradictory feelings of individuals opting for a detached family house. On one hand, the periurban residents expressed a preference "for privacy, to live in a cocoon with a garden", while on the other side, they too had a desire to be surrounded by schools, shops, and neighbors, i.e., to have "urban and neighbourhood services and social relations that are more characteristic of a dense urban fabric" (Frankhauser and Ansel 2016, 60). Thus, the detached house appears as both "attractive because it is calm and private" and repellent "because it is isolated and therefore lonely". After analyzing several studies on the French territory, studies performed in Madrid (Amérigo and Aragonés 1990), Barcelona (Pol 2002), and the study of the Dutch residential environmental satisfaction (Adriaanse 2007), the authors made an important observation: residential satisfaction seems to depend more on subjective criteria than on objective criteria (Frankhauser and Ansel 2016, 64).

In the following paragraphs, I will provide some examples of how the immediate residential environment influences the aesthetic judgments that the inhabitants might have of the urban environment. Nina, who grew up in the low-density neighborhood of Neuchâtel, speaks of her arrival in the city of Lausanne where she was confronted with a different lifestyle and a relatively new and unfamiliar urban landscape. She speaks of how this change of lifestyle came with a shift in the aesthetic understanding of the urban environment:

“- Je pense que je suis influencée par le milieu où j'ai grandi. (...) C'est la campagne neuchâteloise. Un endroit qui s'appelle Val-de-Travers. C'est vraiment... il y a plein de montagnes, plein d'endroits où on fait des balades. C'est vraiment un petit village, pas beaucoup d'habitants.

- Et quand le changement a eu lieu ?

- Quand je suis venue faire mes études ici.

- Est-ce que tu te souviens comment ce passage t'a influencé ?

- Alors je me souviens que je n'aimais pas du tout Lausanne. Je trouvais qu'il y avait trop de gens. Je détestais prendre le métro. Les gens étaient entassés. Vu que je venais d'un petit village, j'avais l'habitude que mes voisins me disent bonjour. C'est ridicule un peu. Mais j'avais l'habitude que mes voisins me disent bonjour. Que sur le chemin les gens me disent bonjour, et c'est pas forcément le cas dans une ville. Ça me faisait bizarre. Je me rappelle que je disais toujours bonjour aux gens dans mon immeuble et il y avait des gens qui ne me répondaient pas, ou qui devaient se dire que j'étais un peu bizarre. Mais non, au début, ça ne me plaisait pas tellement.

- Et au niveau visuel, comment tu trouvais la ville ?

- Je pense que je voyais pas grand chose, parce que je pense que je faisais toujours les mêmes chemins, j'allais faire mes commissions et j'allais à l'UNIL. Au début, je restais pas beaucoup dans la ville, et j'aimais beaucoup la vue par exemple depuis l'UNIL. Elle est super jolie. Mais après ce que je voyais, je ne trouvais pas que c'était particulièrement beau. Sauf à Noël, là je trouvais que c'était joli. (...)

- Est-ce que tu pourrais me décrire ce passage en ville un peu plus en détail ?

- Je pense que déjà j'ai commencé à voir plus de choses, aller dans différents endroits, du coup ça a fait que ça m'a plus plu. J'ai vu des choses différentes et puis aussi au bout d'un moment, c'est devenu un environnement familier. Enfin, j'ai commencé d'avoir des habitudes ici, à faire ma vie ici et du coup forcément ça m'a plus plu. (...) Mais après, si un jour je ferais une famille, je me verrais moins en fait dans une ville.

- Pourquoi ?

- Justement, je pense que du fait que j'ai grandi plus à la campagne, je me dis que mes enfants ne pourront pas aller jouer dehors. Parce que si j'habite plus près de la route, et je n'ai pas de jardin, ils ne peuvent pas jouer sur le trottoir. (...)

- Et tu penses que la ville ne convient pas aux enfants ?

- Alors finalement oui, parce que j'ai rencontré énormément de gens d'ici qui ont grandi ici et qui disent que c'était super quand même de grandir ici. Mais moi j'ai toujours imaginé plus la campagne. Parce que moi j'ai grandi à la campagne et j'allais jouer dehors et il n'y avait pas de risque, il n'y avait pas trop de routes partout et voilà nos parents pouvaient nous laisser dehors sans trop de surveillance et sans trop de s'inquiéter. Il y avait des enfants à côté. J'imagine mieux ça." - Nina, 25, ville (campagne)

Lara, in contrast, was born in Lausanne and spent her whole life in a dense urban context. She strongly appreciates the lifestyle related to the dense city, and also finds much (aesthetic) pleasure in the liveliness of street life:

"- Moi j'ai toujours habité au centre, très centre-ville. Je suis née à Lausanne. J'ai toujours vécu à Lausanne et j'ai vécu au centre-ville vers le Tunnel au départ. Après j'ai vécu en Plaines du Loup, avant, au tout début j'ai vécu dans le quartier des Plaines du Loup, vers le stade de la Pontaise, qui est un quartier plus populaire. (...) Je pense qu'on avait vraiment une super enfance parce qu'on jouait tout le temps dehors. C'était des blocs, je ne sais pas si tu les a déjà vus, que je trouve d'ailleurs assez beaux, mais maintenant ils ont changé. C'était des balcons qui avaient des petits carrés comme ça. C'était très joli. Maintenant ils ont rempli les balcons, donc y a une espèce de couleur un peu vert, caca d'oie qui est comme ça, qui remplit ces trous. On a vécu là-bas jusqu'à nos, je ne sais pas nos douze ans, depuis qu'on était petits, on était tout le temps dehors, tout le temps, tout le temps, et c'était super parce qu'il y a plein de parcs et de machins où tu peux aller sans les voitures, sans tout ça (...) On était assez libres aussi. Je pense qu'aujourd'hui on fait plus attention peut-être aux enfants, qu'ils ne peuvent pas sortir à cause des voitures, à cause du trafic, à cause de tout ça. J'ai plein d'amis qui ont des enfants comme ça et puis qui réfléchissent déjà à quitter la ville pour aller en campagne parce que c'est mieux pour les enfants, la pollution et tout ça. La violence. (...)

- Est-ce que tu penses que c'est justifié tout ça ?

- Ben, je ne serais pas objective parce que, parce que moi j'adore la ville quelle qu'elle soit, je suis trop citadine je pense, j'aime être dans le bazar de la ville, j'aime bien, ça ne me dérange pas. J'ai pas un problème avec trop de voitures, j'ai pas, je ne suis pas, enfin, j'attends d'être plus vieille et peut-être pour aller... mais c'est... non, je plaisante. Ça ne me dérange pas, j'aime bien en fait ce poumon comme ça, cette vie-là donc en fait, je trouve plutôt triste parce que je trouve que les gens s'isolent et puis qu'en fait, ils vont vivre en campagne pour avoir trois voitures, et puis on se voit moins, voilà". - Lara, 30, ville (ville)

A prolonged exposition to a certain reality might lead a person to change the way they perceive, conceive and imagine it.

“Mais disons surtout ce qui a dû être dérangeant c’est que là il devait y avoir des petites maisons qu’on a dû raser pour mettre ça. Et après voilà, il faut que la nature, la ville doit évoluer et continuer, quoi. Mais ça n’a rien à voir les uns avec les autres. C’était des choses qui détonnent. Mais après on se fait à tout. On voit même plus, c’est ça en fait, à un moment donné. Des choses qui nous ont choqués, au bout d’un moment on les voit dans la nature, ça se fond dedans, quoi.” - Emilia, 57, ville (campagne)

“J’ai tellement l’habitude de cette vision-là [photo 3], elle m’est très familière, donc, je ne peux pas la trouver complètement moche.” - Valérie, 36, ville (périurbain)

“Dès le moment où on habite un endroit et on l’investit, probablement qu’il ne sera jamais complètement laid.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

“Je pense qu’on ne voit plus ce CHUV. On n’y pense plus. C’est intégré. La tour Bel-Air, c’était un scandale. Maintenant c’est un patrimoine. Je pense qu’on est dans le fond du problème. Vous voyez ?” - Maria, 59, ville (ville)

The last example illustrates how both beauty and ugliness can become lived values, embodied in the structures of daily life to the extent that they become almost “invisible”. Thus, an individual becomes unaware of these values’ influence on their day-to-day choices. An image becomes so solid that it becomes an inseparable part of one’s spatialities. An individual simply knows that an object or a landscape is beautiful and does not think of it any more in. It is a sort of phenomenon that is so internalized that the person does not know that he/she knows it. However, this does not mean that the aesthetic dimension has ceased to perpetually inform one’s actions. As Elias argued, people often take for granted the complex interdependencies in which they are situated and the historical dimension of these interdependencies.⁵⁸ Once again, this is why aesthetic considerations must always be a part of societal debates.

“On regarde pas dehors pour voir ce qui est beau parce qu’on habite là.” - Victoria, 59, périurbain (hypourbain)

“En règle général on y va parce qu’on trouve beau, oui. Quand c’est des voyages, mais il y a aussi des vacances qu’on fait régulièrement dans une station depuis que j’étais petit ou là, c’est plus du repos. Bon c’est beau aussi, mais on connaît tellement qu’on ne fait plus attention. On fait moins attention que c’est beau. Après ça dépend du type de vacances, mais en général si c’est un voyage à l’étranger,

⁵⁸ See the previous section “Studying Subjectivity: A Spatial and Historical Analysis of Aesthetic Judgment”.

on choisit quelque chose de beau qui nous plaît visuellement.” - Patrick, 34, village (village)

“Un immeuble comme Philip Morris, qui est tout en verre, voilà, moi je ne le trouverais pas forcément beau. Mais à force de le voir, je ne le vois même plus, en fait.” - Emilia, 67, ville (ville)

“- Est-ce que les Alpes peuvent être laides ?

- D'une part, tu connais et c'est pas forcément spécial, donc tu vois pas souvent non plus comme quelque chose de spécialement beau. (...) Ça reste beau parce que d'une part c'est un peu, comme on a dit avant, où tu te sens à l'aise, c'est-à-dire, où tu as grandi aussi (...) et d'autre part, vu que tu connais (...) peut-être ça t'impressionne déjà moins.” - Thomas, 25, ville (campagne)

Aesthetic categories always carry the imprint of other societal dimensions. Aesthetic judgments bear a strong historical component. When beauty emerges, the entire history of humanity can potentially emerge as well. However, history is not the only dimension that can emerge. Aesthetic judgments are equally pregnant with political and economic dimensions. The following examples illustrate this quite explicitly:

“- Si j'étais multimillionnaire, je ne m'achèterais pas un yacht avec des robinets en or, parce que je trouve ça de mauvais goût. Le goût des riches simplement, je ne trouve pas ça beau. Les grands yachts qui valent 120 millions, moi je trouve ça extrêmement laid.

- Pourquoi ?

- Mais parce que c'est du tape-à-l'œil. C'est affreux. Donc, moi je m'achèterais pas la villa sur la côte, là avec un hélicodrome. Vous voyez, pour faire descendre un hélico il faut un hélicodrome, et puis je ne sais pas quoi. Non merci. Si on me donnait, je ne sais pas, si on me la donnait, je la revendrais.” - David, 65, périurbain (ville)

“On est dans une logique des frics, c'est tout. (...) Parce qu'on sait que le rapport argent est tellement énorme. Moi j'appelle ça vendre son âme. Mais il n'y a pas que nous qui l'avons fait. Et c'est plutôt ça qui m'ennuie que le bâtiment lui-même.” - Maria, 59, ville (ville)

“Des bâtiments sans âme je trouve ça triste. Tu vois des milieux comme je te parlais de la rue de la Borne là, sont ses anciens bâtiments des années 60, 50 qui n'ont pas d'âme, qui sont froids, qui ne s'emprennent pas de l'humanité, en fait, voilà. Ça je trouve moche.” - Chantal, 56, périurbain (campagne)

“Bon ce qui est laid, par exemple, c'est les bâtiments qui sont juste en face de nous-là, ils sont affreux, pour une bonne partie. (...) C'est vraiment typiquement ces trucs, des types d'architectures que je trouve un peu déconnectées du vivant. D'ailleurs, ce n'est pas par hasard que c'est des espèces d'assurances, enfin, je pense que c'est un monde un peu spécial, quoi.” - Urs, 42, ville (campagne)

“[Photo 1] Ah voilà, ça c'est St. Saph. Et j'aime beaucoup. J'aime beaucoup puisque c'est Lavaux. Il y a de l'histoire. (...) J'aime cette esthétique-là à cause de l'histoire, dont c'est le porteur, dont c'est le symbole.” - Walter, 60, village-périurbain (campagne)

Figures, percentages, and economic facts are necessary but far from sufficient to explain the complex processes behind each residential choice. Objective criteria fail even more when it tries to investigate the underlying reasons for such a decision. The price and size of a new home often mean little if one finds the surrounding environment ugly.

“Ecoutez, je prends un cas que je connais bien qui est le mien. Disons, je suis représentant de la classe moyenne. Si je cherche un appartement, d'abord là aussi chez moi, il faut que je trouve, au prix que je peux payer, plus ou moins dans le quartier, etc. Mais disons chez moi, si les exigences fonctionnelles de base sont plus ou moins remplies, le beau intervient assez vite. En d'autres termes, je suis prêt à payer plus pour quelque chose de beau. Je suis prêt à aller dans un quartier où je dois faire plus de déplacements, parce que l'appartement me plaît. Je dirais pour moi, c'est l'un des critères qui peut-être après le prix, la question du transport, c'est un des trois ou cinq premiers critères.” - Peter, 63, ville (ville)

“Quand on prenait le train, adolescent, pour aller à Genève, quand on arrivait juste avant la gare de Bellevue, bon c'était un train qui s'arrêtait partout, quand on arrivait juste avant la gare de Bellevue, là, on voit le Mont Blanc d'une manière majestueuse avec le lac devant, puis tous les jours, il est différent. Des fois on le voit pas, des fois on le voit partiellement, il est rose, il est bleuâtre, il est très blanc, il est orange, il est jaune, il est gris. Tous les jours, on réfléchit même pas, on le regarde et puis on voit que cette beauté elle change, puis les changements de lumière font partie de cette beauté du Mont Blanc.” - Barbara, 65, périurbain (périurbain)

“J'ai juste une crainte. Si le guy à côté il claque (rire), il meurt, qui va reprendre sa maison après ? Parce que vu que tu as le droit de construire plus grand, donc ils vont construire plus grand pour occuper plus de terrain et la ils vont piquer mon soleil couchant. Alors ça, mon soleil couchant pour moi. Si je devais déménager, je choisirais, et ça je pense tout le temps, une habitation, que ce soit un appartement ou n'importe quoi, où je puisse avoir le soleil l'après-midi. Pour moi le meilleur moment de la journée c'est l'après-midi, fin d'après-midi, le soir avec le soleil qui se

couche. C'est le moment le plus rouge pour moi." - Chantal, 65, périurbain
(campagne)

By constantly pointing out the complexity and ambiguity of human existence, aesthetics teaches us that no phenomena should be a priori dismissed as irrelevant for our understanding of the world. In the same way that the psychological, economic, or political dimensions sharpen and influence a human being's capacity for discrimination — i.e., the capacity of each individual to make choices —, the aesthetic dimension brings societal objects and individuals closer to each other in one respect, and farther away from each other in another. If we as researchers aspire to clearly understand the functioning of urban systems (as well as any other social system created by humans), we cannot stop short of exploring its aesthetic dimension since it runs through our entire society and is strongly and inseparably interconnected to the other dimensions of society, which hold it together as a system.

7 Conclusions: On Coexistence of the Actual with the Virtual

“From my words you will have reached the conclusion that the real Berenice is a temporal succession of different cities, alternately just and unjust. But what I wanted to warn you about is something else: all the future Berenices are already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable.”

Italo Calvino

In the 1974 book “The Invisible Cities”, Italo Calvino writes about the Venetian merchant and explorer Marco Polo who tells stories about 55 different cities to the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan. The cities he describes are all unique, with each city encapsulating a particular aspect of urban life. For example, the twin city Valdrada is built on a lakeshore, so that the city is mirrored in the water. The spider-web city Octavia is made between two steep mountains, suspended over the void. In Eusapia, the inhabitants have constructed an identical copy of their city, deep underground. These are just a few examples of the 55 cities he describes. Marco Polo also describes a number of other places he claims to have visited. At some point, the emperor remarks that Marco Polo never speaks of his home city Venice. With a smile, Marco Polo instantly replies: “What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?” The message of Calvino is clear: Invisible is not the same as nonexistent.

All the ‘invisible’ cities described by Marco Polo are the invisible part of Venice because the reality of Venice exists not only in its actuality, in what can be observed of it: it also exists in its virtuality — it is also made of its inhabitants’ imaginative projections. Different virtual Venices coexist in one and the same moment, informing each other and participating in the production of the Venetian urban space. The task of aesthetics as a discipline is to investigate what objectively informs individuals’ imaginative perceptions of an aesthetic object, which can be any societal object including the city. What all great artists have in common is precisely the capacity to make the invisible visible, to transform the virtual into the actual, and, by means of various techniques of representation, to

point to other possible worlds. The main argument of this thesis is that this particular imaginative activity is not reserved solely to artists — each individual, to a greater or lesser degree, uses their imaginative capacities in their day-to-day interactions in society. Studying the aesthetic dimension can help urban researchers better understand how the world becomes internalized or externalized by inhabitants, as imaginative urban actors. What needs to be better understood is how the novelty is born in a constant dialogue between the ethical and the aesthetic.

Since space is rooted in the separation between the components of social systems, one of the most important tasks of urban sciences is to investigate the nature and structure of this separation. Aesthetic phenomena, such as beauty, are important for scientific investigation precisely because they alter the distance between societal objects. They bring societal objects closer to one another in one respect, and farther away in another. The fact that humans are bounded to, and separated from, each other by means of learned abilities, including aesthetic emotions and aesthetic judgments, accounts for one of the most striking differences between the natural world and human societies. Aesthetic qualities are not to be taken as properties of the environment per se, nor merely as properties of the person reacting to the environment. Rather, they are properties that emerge from the interaction (relation) between individuals and their environments in a process in which they constitute themselves as subjects, where each individual has an idea of what society should be like and what it should look like. However, what remains unexplored in this study is the relationship of images to language, i.e. to which extent the narrative sequentially of language can express the simultaneous character of human imaginative consciousness.

Recent "turns" in social sciences, namely the visual, qualitative, actorial and spatial turns, all indicate that researchers are putting a greater emphasis on the individual. I therefore insist on a theory of social organization that gives due consideration to reflexive and imaginative human actors, who have their own interests, beliefs and commitments. It is essential to recognize that humans, unlike the components of systems that are found in the natural world, are capable of particular sorts of action due to their imaginative capacities that allow them to go beyond the actual perceived world. The aesthetic dimension directly involves the human imaginative consciousness, which in turn activates the realm of the virtual, i.e., the realm that exists only in a latent state, and does not appear visibly (fr. *qui n'est qu'en puissance*). Since every human intentional experience is spatialized, I investigated a particular spatial structure through which the aesthetic experience occurs as such. I called this structure the aesthetic space.

The aesthetic space is a product of human imaginative consciousness — it is an imaginative space. It encompasses both the actual and the virtual. While engaged in aesthetic experience, humans exhibit a particular sort of intentionality through which they bring to mind what is absent and invisible *through* what is present and perceived. By making use of their lived body, individuals are capable of engaging in a particular sort of imaginative play through which memories of the past, anticipations of the future and the actualized perceived present are conjured together, informing one another. The *order* that allows this co-existence is precisely the aesthetic space. This space is topological in nature and purely subjective, for relations between objects do not exist independently from the perceiver — objects are solely related in the ways the perceiver imagines them to be related (which does not exclude the possibility that what is imagined actually occurs as such!). In the aesthetic space, the world becomes a pure subjective representation. However, unlike mere fantasies or hallucinations, the production of aesthetic space strongly and inextricably depends on the actual perceived world. As Merleau-Ponty perpetually argued, the freedom of imaginative thought does not come when human beings turn away from the actual reality of the world, but rather when they turn towards it. It is precisely because individuals imaginatively focus on the *here* and *now* that they are able to detach from the actual world and enter the virtual. The pleasure of aesthetic experience is both an effect of an aesthetic object, as well as a particular mode of understanding the aesthetic object. Researchers cannot therefore consider individuals as mere passive agents, for both the production of aesthetic space and the emergence of aesthetic phenomena necessitate an individual's active engagement.

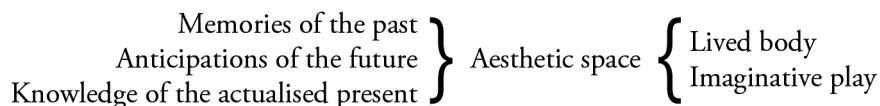


Fig. 21 - The production of aesthetic space

Over their lifetime, people, as spatial actors, create a network of aesthetic places. It is one of the many ways by which humans appropriate and inhabit the three-dimensional topographical space of the material world. The aesthetic dimension is a part of a spatialized practical action, and is not just a matter of passive contemplation. Aesthetic space provides each individual, as *homo aestheticus*, with the possibility of reconstituting the broken pieces of their modern urban existence and therefore the possibility of producing new meanings in the world they are a part of. Since the aesthetic dimension always nourishes and informs individuals' spatialities and their decision-making processes, my research explores how the subjective realm of the aesthetic has proved itself

able to generate conditions that lead to action, and consequently influence other dimensions of society, especially in the ethical, political or legal realms.

If aesthetics plays an important role in human decision-making, then the following question appears: How does one's mode of aesthetic understanding evolve from seeing the world in a certain way to seeing it in another way? I argue that any research on aesthetic sensitivities that neglects the direct *lived* experience with the inhabited environment will be seriously incomplete. It is in the interaction with urban and natural environments that inhabitants develop their aesthetic sensibilities. This is why, to be able to investigate the choice of residential environment from an aesthetic perspective, I established a direct contact with the inhabitants of the Lemanic Arc region in Switzerland. I prepared and conducted interviews that consisted of both classical semi-open interviews and photo-interviews and used some strategies of the grounded theory to dissect, examine and compare the participants' discourses. The interviews with the inhabitants allowed me to make a variety of conclusions:

1. The aesthetic experience elicits strong emotions, activates the agency of urban actors and influences their individual and collective actions;
2. The immediate urban environment strongly influences people's aesthetic judgments, public space acting as a space per excellence where aesthetic sensitivities evolve and mature;
3. The aesthetic judgments of people in Switzerland developed in particular spatial, social and historical conditions, where the city played a pivotal role.
4. Childhood appears as a critical period for the development of aesthetic sensitivities and an individual's early-age residential environment acts as a point of reference for their future aesthetic judgments;
5. Aesthetic judgments are unactualised societal choices made under *partial* freedom from the burden of actual ethical decisions.
6. Since aesthetic judgments require of a person to position themselves on issues of identity and transformation, studying the aesthetic dimension allows researchers to better understand the process in which individuals are constituted as self-reflexive subjects.
7. A change of lifestyle comes with a shift in one's aesthetic understanding of the urban environment.

If subjected to serious analysis, aesthetic judgment can say a lot about the society. Since our existence as human beings involves both an alternating involvement with, and detachment from, the world, we escape in the realm of aesthetic — only to realize that even the world of human imagination is informed by our actual lived experience, which we are relentlessly trying to overcome. But this escape is important to be studied for what

it tells us is that there is not any marginal scientific objects - things that were dismissed as irrelevant can suddenly appear as fundamental for understanding the way individuals make choices and act in society. This is why individuals' aesthetic sensibilities should be a matter of a societal debate, contrary to the old Latin saying *de gustibus non est disputandum*. If aesthetic categories emerge from an imaginative play between the actual and the virtual, this play is too serious to be taken for granted.

8 Bibliography

- Acebillo, Josep, Lévy, Jacques, and Schmid, Christian. 2013. *Globalization of Urbanity*. ACTAR Publishers.
- Ackerman, James S. 1962. "A Theory of Style." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (3): 227.
- Adriaanse, C. C. M. 2007. "Measuring Residential Satisfaction: a Residential Environmental Satisfaction Scale (RESS)." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 22 (3). Kluwer Academic Publishers: 287–304.
- Alexander, Henry Gavin. 1998. *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence: Together with Extracts From Newton's Principia and Optics*.
- Alloa, Emmanuel. 2011. "Seeing-in, Seeing-as, Seeing-with: Looking Through Pictures." *Image and Imaging in Philosophy, Science, and the Arts. Volume I. Proceedings of the 33rd International Wittgenstein Symposium*. Ontos: 179-190 (2011)
- Amérigo, Maria, and Aragonés, Juan Ignacio. 1990. "Residential Satisfaction in Council Housing." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 10 (4): 313–25.
- André, Yves. 2008. *Paysages Occupés. Enquete photographique fribourgeoise*. Gollion: Infolio
- Anderson, Philip W. 1972. "More Is Different." *Science* 177(4047), pp.393-396.
- Appleton, Jay. 1996. *The Experience of Landscape*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Aragonés, Juan Ignacio, Francescato, Guido, and Gärling, Tommy. 2002. *Residential environments: Choice, satisfaction, and behavior*. Praeger Pub Text.
- Archer, Margaret S. 2007. *Making Our Way Through the World*. Cambridge University Press.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Arisaka, Yoko. 2008. "Heidegger's Theory of Space: a Critique of Dreyfus." *Inquiry* 38 (4). Taylor & Francis Group: 455–67.
- Arthur, Richard. 1994. "Space and Relativity in Newton and Leibniz." *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 45 (1). Oxford University Press: 219–40.
- Aschermann, Ellen, Dannenberg, Ursula, and Patricia Schulz, Angelika. 1998. "Photographs as Retrieval Cues for Children." *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 12 (1). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd: 55–66.
- Bachelard, Gaston. 1994. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press.
- Banks, Marcus, and Zeitlyn, David. 2002. "Visual Methods in Social Research." *Visual Studies*. Sage.
- Barbera, Filippo. 2004. *Meccanismi Sociali*. Elementi di sociologia analitica. Il mulino.
- Barbera, Filippo. 2006. "A star is born? The authors, principles and objectives of analytical sociology." *Papers: revista de sociologia*, (80), pp.0031-50.
- Barthes, Roland. 1964. "Le théâtre de Baudelaire." *Essais critiques*, pp.41-47.
- Barthes, Roland. 1986. "Semiology and the Urban." *The city and the sign: An introduction to urban semiotics*, 87-98.
- Barthes, Roland. 1993. *A Roland Barthes Reader*. London: Vintage.
- Barthes, Roland. 1981. *Camera Lucida*. Macmillan.
- Barthes, Roland. 1997. *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*. University of California Press.

- Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb. 1750. *Aesthetica*. Hildesheim: Olms (1986).
- Beaude, Boris. 2008. *Éléments pour une géographie du lieu réticulaire. Avoir lieu aujourd'hui*. No. EPFL-THESIS-176218. Université Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne.
- Beaude, Boris. 2012. "Internet. Changer l'espace, changer la société." No. EPFL-BOOK-176494. Fyp.
- Beaude, Boris. 2015. "Les virtualités de la synchronisation." *Géo-Regards n°7: Mobilités et gestion des flux à l'ère du numérique*.
- Becker, Howard S. 1974. "Photography and Sociology." *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 1 (1): 3–26.
- Becker, Howard S. 1978. "Do photographs tell the truth." *Afterimage*, 5(8), pp.9-13.
- Becker, Howard S. 2008. "Visual Sociology, Documentary Photography, and Photojournalism: It's (Almost) All a Matter of Context." *Visual Studies* 10 (1-2). Taylor & Francis Group: 5–14.
- Benjamin, Andrew. 2006. *Style and Time*. Northwestern University Press.
- Bergson, Henri. 2012. *The Creative Mind*. Courier Corporation.
- Berleant, Arnold. 1999. "Mothering and Metaphor." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57 (3): 363.
- Berlyne, Daniel E. 1971. *Aesthetics and Psychobiology* (Vol. 336). New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Bernstein, Jay M. 1992. *The fate of art: aesthetic alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*. Penn State Press.
- Berman, Marshal, 1988. *All that is solid melts into air: The experience of modernity*. Penguin Books.
- Berque, Augustin. 2008. "Ce Qui Est en Jeu Dans La Ville-Campagne." *Campagne-Ville. Le Pas De Deux*. Lausanne, Presses Polytechniques Et Universitaires Romandes, 199–210.
- Berque, Augustin. 2000. *Ecumène: Introduction à l'étude des milieux humains*. Editions Belin.
- Blanchet, Alain. 2007. *L'Enquête et ses méthodes: L'entretien*. Armand Colin.
- Blyton, P. 1987. "Continuing Debate: the Image of Work. Documentary Photography and the Production of 'Reality'" *International Social Science Journal* 113 : 415-424.
- Bobbio, Norberto, Ryle, Martin, and Soper, Kate. 2005. *Liberalism and democracy*. Vol. 4. Verso.
- Boltanski, Luc, and Thévenot, Laurent. 1991. *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*. Collection NRF Essais, Gallimard
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2004. *Esquisse Pour Une Auto-Analyse*. Raisons d'Agir.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2013. *Distinction*. Routledge.
- Bradford, John Hamilton. 2010. *Systems, Social Order, and the Global Debt Crisis*. PhD diss., University of Tennessee.
- Brenner, Neil, and Schmid, Christian. 2015. "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?" *City* 19 (2-3): 151–82.
- Brentano, Franz. 1995. *Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint*. O. Kraus.
- Broad, C. D. 1946. "Leibniz's Last Controversy with the Newtonians." *Theoria* 12 (3). Blackwell Publishing Ltd: 143–68.
- Brodsky, Joseph. 1993. *Watermark*.
- Brush, Robert, Richard E Chenoweth, and Todd Barman. 2000. "Group Differences in the Enjoyability of Driving Through Rural Landscapes." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 47 (1-2): 39–45.
- Bullington, Jennifer. 2013. *The Expression of the Psychosomatic Body From a Phenomenological Perspective*. Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media.

- Bullough, Edward. 1912. "Psychical distance' as a factor in art and an aesthetic principle." *British Journal of Psychology*, 1904-1920, 5(2), pp.87-118.
- Bunge, Mario. 1982. *Treatise on Basic Philosophy, Volume 4, Ontology II: a World of Systems*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Bunge, Mario. 1996. *Finding Philosophy in Social Science*. Yale University Press.
- Bunge, Mario. 1999. *Social Science Under Debate: a Philosophical Perspective*. University of Toronto Press.
- Bunge, Mario. 2000. "Systemism: the Alternative to Individualism and Holism." *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 29 (2): 147-57.
- Bunge, Mario. 2006. *Chasing Reality: Strife Over Realism*. University of Toronto Press
- Bunge, Mario. 2011. *Political Philosophy: Fact, Fiction, and Vision*. Transaction Publishers.
- Bunge, Mario. 2012. *Causality and Modern Science*. Courier Corporation.
- Burgin, Victor. 1982. "Looking at Photographs." In *Thinking Photography*, 142-53. London: Macmillan Education UK.
- Burri, Régula Valérie. 2012. "Visual Rationalities: Towards a Sociology of Images." *Current Sociology* 60 (1). SAGE Publications: 45-60.
- Calvino, Italo. 2013. *Invisible Cities*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Carlson, Allen. 2005. *Aesthetics and the Environment*. Routledge.
- Carlson, Allen. 2015. "Environmental Aesthetics." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta.
- Carroll, Noël. 2001. *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carroll, Noël. 2002. "Aesthetic Experience Revisited." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2). Oxford University Press: 145-68. doi:10.1093/bjaesthetics/42.2.145.
- Cassirer, Ernst. 1943. "Newton and Leibniz." *The Philosophical Review* 52 (4): 366.
- Cassirer, Ernst. 1969. "Mythic, Aesthetic and Theoretical Space." *Man and World* 2 (1). Kluwer Academic Publishers: 3-17.
- Cavin, Joëlle Salomon, and Marchand, Bernard. 2010. *Antiurbain: Origines et conséquences de l'urbaphobie*. PPUR Presses polytechniques.
- Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Orig. 1980, Translation Steven Rendall. Berkeley, CA.
- Certeau, Michel de. 1990. "L'invention Du Quotidien." *Arts De Faire* 1: 57-63.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. SAGE.
- Chatterjee, Anjan. 2013. *The Aesthetic Brain*. Oxford University Press.
- Choay, Françoise. 1994. "Penser La Non-Ville Et La Non-Campagne De Demain." *La France au-delà du siècle. La tour d'Aigues*. Ed. de l'Aude.
- Christis, Jac., 2001. Luhmann's theory of knowledge: beyond realism and constructivism?. *Soziale Systeme*, 7(2), pp.328-349.
- Clark-Ibáñez, Marisol. 2004. "Framing the Social World with Photo-Elicitation Interviews." *American Behavioral Scientist* 47 (12). SAGE Publications: 1507-27.
- Cohen, Jack, and Stewart, Ian. 2000. *The collapse of chaos: Discovering simplicity in a complex world*. Penguin UK, 2000.
- Cohn, Danièle, and Di Liberti, Giuseppe. 2012. *Textes clés d'esthétique: Connaissance, art et expérience*. Vrin.
- Collier, John. 1957. "Photography in Anthropology: a Report on Two Experiments." *American Anthropologist* 59 (5): 843-59.
- Collier, John, and Collier, Malcolm. 1986. *Visual Anthropology*. UNM Press.
- Collier, John Jr. 2010. "Visual Anthropology's Contribution to the Field of Anthropology." *Visual Anthropology* 1 (1). Taylor & Francis Group: 37-46.
- Collinson, Diané. 1985. "Ethics and Aesthetics Are One'." *The British Journal of*

- Aesthetics* 25 (3): 266–72.
- Corboz, Andre. 1990. "Vers la ville-territoire." *Ergänzungen*. Berne, Stuttgart: Paul Haupt.
- Crang, Mike. 1996. "Envisioning Urban Histories: Bristol as Palimpsest, Postcards, and Snapshots." *Environment and Planning A* 28 (3). SAGE Publications: 429–52.
- Crang, Mike. 1997. "Picturing Practices: Research Through the Tourist Gaze." *Progress in Human Geography* 21 (3). SAGE Publications: 359–73.
- Davidson, Mark, and Iveson, Kurt. 2015. "Beyond City Limits: a Conceptual and Political Defense of 'the City' as an Anchoring Concept for Critical Urban Theory." *City* 19 (5): 646–64.
- Davies, Rob. 2016. "How Well-Heeled City Types Leave You Brown and Out in Finance." *The Guardian*, September 2.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus, Translated by Brian Massumi*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dewey, John. 2005. *Art as Experience*. Penguin.
- Diamond, Karen E., and Hestenes, Linda L.. 1996. "Preschool Children'S Conceptions of Disabilities the Salience of Disability in Children'S Ideas About Others." *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 16 (4). SAGE Publications: 458–75.
- Dickie, George. 1964. "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1.1 (1964): 56-65.
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. 1992. *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*. Les Editions de Minuit.
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. 2005. *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*. Penn State Press.
- Drew, Paul Ed, and Wootton, Anthony Ed. 1988. "Erving Goffman: Exploring the interaction order." Revised papers originally presented at a conference titled *Erving Goffman, an Interdisciplinary Appreciation*, held at the University of York in July 1986.. Northeastern University Press.
- Durkheim, Émile. 1964. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Edited by George E.G. Catlin.
- Durkheim, Émile. 2010. *La science sociale et l'action*. Presses universitaires de France.
- Eagleton, Terry. 1991. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Eco, Umberto. 2010. *On Beauty*. MacLehose Press.
- Eibl-Eibesfeld, Irenäus. 1984. *Die Biologie Des Menschlichen Verhaltens: Grundriss Der Humanethologie. 2. Überarbeitete Auflage*. München: Piper. S.
- Eichenbaum, Howard. 2004. "Hippocampus." *Neuron* 44 (1): 109–20.
- Eichenbaum, Howard, Dudchenko, Paul, Wood, Emma, Shapiro, Matthew, and Tanila, Heikki. 1999. "The Hippocampus, Memory, and Place Cells." *Neuron* 23 (2): 209–26.
- Elder-Vass, Dave. 2005. "Emergence and the Realist Account of Cause." *Journal of Critical Realism* 4 (2). Brill: 315–38.
- Elias, Norbert. 1978. *The Civilizing Process. 1939*. Trans. Edmund Jeffcott. New York: Urizen.
- Elias, Norbert. 1983. *The Court Society*. Pantheon.
- Elias, Norbert. 1984. *What Is Sociology?* Columbia University Press.
- Elias, Norbert. 1992. *Time: An Essay, Translated in Part by Edmund Jephcott*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Elias, Norbert. 1994. *The Civilizing Process: The history of manners and state formation and civilization*, Trans. E. Jephcott.
- Elias, Norbert. 2001. *Society of Individuals*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Ellen, Ingrid Gould, and Turner, Margery Austin. 2010. "Does Neighborhood Matter?"

- Assessing Recent Evidence." *Housing Policy Debate* 8 (4). Taylor & Francis Group: 833–66.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Between Erlebnis and Erfahrung: Cinema Experience with Benjamin." *Paragraph* 32, no. 3 (2009): 292-312.
- Elwell, Frank W. 2009. *Macrosociology*. Edwin Mellen Press.
- Entrikin, J. Nicholas. 1991. "The betweenness of place." *The Betweenness of Place*. Macmillan Education UK. 6-26.
- Epstein, Iris, Stevens, Bonnie, McKeever, Patricia, and Baruchel, Sylvain. 2006. "Photo Elicitation Interview (PEI): Using Photos to Elicit Children's Perspectives." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5 (3). SAGE Publications: 1–11.
- Erlichson, Herman. 1967. "The Leibniz-Clarke Controversy: Absolute Versus Relative Space and Time." *American Journal of Physics* 35 (2). American Association of Physics Teachers: 89–98.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2013. *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Routledge.
- Fatio, Guillaume. 1904. *Ouvrons Les Yeux: Voyage Esthétique À Travers La Suisse*. Société Genevoise d'Édition 'Atar'.
- Fauchille, Jean-Nicolas. 2016. *La Justice Spatiale Comme Pragmatique*. (Doctoral Dissertation). EPFL.
- Fineberg, Jonathan David. 1997. *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fischer, Peter, Dieter Frey, Peus, Claudia, and Kastenmüller, Andreas. 2008. "The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance: State of the Science and Directions for Future Research." In *Clashes of Knowledge*, 1:189–98. Knowledge and Space. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Fishman, Robert. 1987. *Bourgeois Utopias: the Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. Basic books.
- Florida, Richard. 2005. *Cities and the Creative Class*. Routledge.
- Florida, Richard. 2010. *The Flight of the Creative Class*. Harper Collins.
- Fortin, Andrée, and Carole Després. 2009. "Le Choix Du Périurbain À Québec. Nature Et Biographie Résidentielle." *Articulo-Journal of Urban Research*, no. 5.
- Foster, Hal. 1985. *Postmodern Culture*. Pluto Press.
- Foster, Stuart J., Hoge John D., and Rosch Richard H.. 2012. "Thinking Aloud About History: Children'S and Adolescents' Responses to Historical Photographs." *Theory & Research in Social Education* 27 (2). Taylor & Francis Group: 179–214.
- Foucault, Michel, and Miskowiec, Jay. 1986. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16 (1): 22.
- Frankhauser, Pierre, and Ansel, Dominique. 2016. *Deciding Where to Live: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Residential Choice in its Social Context*. Springer.
- Fyhn, Marianne, Molden, Sturla, Witter, Menno P., Moser, Edvard I, and Moser, May-Britt. 2004. "Spatial Representation in the Entorhinal Cortex." *Science* 305 (5688). American Association for the Advancement of Science: 1258–64.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1976. *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies, Trans.* PC Smith. New Haven.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1981. *Reason in an Age of Science. Transl. by Frederick G. Lawrence*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1989. *Truth and Method (J. Weinsheimer & DG Marshall, Trans.)*. New York: Continuum.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, and Bernasconi, Robert. 1986. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gault, G., and Bedeau L. 2007. "Les Français et leur habitat: Perception de la densité et des formes d'habitat." Etude menée pour l'Observatoire de la Ville, par la TNS, SOFRES en janvier 2007.

- Gasché, Rodolphe. 2003. *The Idea of Form*. Edited by Stanford University Press.
- Gautier, Théophile. 1900. *The Works of Theophile Gautier: Mademoiselle De Maupin*.
- Gearing, Robin Edward. 2004. "Bracketing in Research: a Typology." *Qualitative Health Research* 14 (10). SAGE Publications: 1429–52.
- Gibson, Bill. 2003. "An Essay on Late Structuralism." *Development economics and structuralist macroeconomics: Essays in honor of Lance Taylor* (2003): 52-76
- Giddens, Anthony. 1987. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism: the Nation-State and Violence*. Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 2013. *The Consequences of Modernity*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gilbert, Katharine Everett, and Kuhn, Helmut. 1939. *A History of Aesthetics*. Thames and Hudson.
- Granger, Gilles Gaston. 1995. *Probable, le possible et le virtuel*. Odile Jacob.
- Given, Lisa M. 2008. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Gjesdal, Kristin. 2012. *Gadamer and the legacy of German idealism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Glaser, Barney G., and Strauss, Anselm L. 2009. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Transaction Publishers.
- Goffman, Erving. 1981. *Forms of Talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goldspink, Christopher and Kay, Robert. 2007. "Social emergence: distinguishing reflexive and non-reflexive modes." In *AAAI Fall Symposium* (pp. 48-55).
- Gombrich, Ernst H.. 1960. *Art and Illusion*. NJ: Princeton.
- Goodman, Nelson. 1978. *Ways of worldmaking* (Vol. 51). Hackett Publishing.
- Gómez-Limón, Javier, and José Vicente de Lucio Fernández. 1999. "Changes in Use and Landscape Preferences on the Agricultural-Livestock Landscapes of the Central Iberian Peninsula (Madrid, Spain)." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 44 (4): 165–75.
- Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology*. 78(6), 1360-1380.
- Gregory, Derek, Johnston, Ron, Pratt, Geraldine, Watts, Michael, and Whatmore, Sarah. 2011. *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gsteiger, Manfred, Weber, Irene, le Quellec, Christine, Tsiolis, Anna, and Riatsch, Clà. 1994. *L'image De La Ville Dans Les Littératures De La Suisse. Das Bild Der Stadt in Den Literaturen Der Schweiz*.
- Guiheux, A., and Centre Georges Pompidou. 1994. *La Ville, Art Et Architecture en Europe, 1870-1993*. Editions Du Centre Pompidou.
- Guyau, Jean-Marie. 1906. *L'art au point de vue sociologique*. F. Alcan.
- Hafting, Torkel, Fyhn, Marianne, Molden, Sturla, Moser, May-Britt, and Moser, Edvard I. 2005. "Microstructure of a Spatial Map in the Entorhinal Cortex." *Nature* 436 (7052). Nature Publishing Group: 801–6.
- Hardt, Michael, and Weeks, Kathi. 2000. *The Jameson Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Harper, Douglas. 1988. "Visual Sociology: Expanding Sociological Vision." *The American Sociologist* 19 (1). Springer-Verlag: 54–70.
- Harper, Douglas. 1997. "Visualizing Structure: Reading Surfaces of Social Life." *Qualitative Sociology* 20 (1). Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers: 57–77.
- Harper, Douglas. 2002. "Talking About Pictures: a Case for Photo Elicitation." *Visual Studies* 17 (1): 13–26.
- Harris, Paul L., 2007. *L'imagination chez l'enfant: Son rôle crucial dans le développement cognitif et affectif*. Paris, Retz.
- Harvey, David. 1992. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Wiley-Blackwell.

- Bearman, Peter. and Hedström, Peter. 2009. What is analytical sociology all about. *The handbook of analytical sociology*, pp.3-24.
- Hedstrom, Peter. 2005. *Dissecting the social: On the principles of analytical sociology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Heft, Harry. 1988. "Affordances of Children's Environments: a Functional Approach to Environmental Description." *Children's Environments Quarterly* 29-37.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1998. *Aesthetics*. Vol. 1. Clarendon Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1971. "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", *Poetry, Language, Thought*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2010. *Being and Time*. SUNY Press.
- Heikkinen, Sakari, Silvonen, Jussi, and Simola, Hannu. 1999. "Technologies of Truth: Peeling Foucault's Triangular Onion." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 20 (1): 141–57.
- Hermann, Michael, and Leuthold, Heiri. 2003. *Atlas Der Politischen Landschaften: Ein Weltanschauliches Porträt Der Schweiz*. vdf Hochschulverlag AG.
- Huizinga, Johan. 1938. *Homo Ludens*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff cop.
- Hurworth, Rosalind. 2004. "Photo-Interviewing." *Qualitative Research Journal* 4 (1). RMIT Publishing: 73.
- Michael Inwood. 1993. "A Hegel Dictionary." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (173): 583.
- Irvin, Sherri. 2008. "The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (1). Oxford University Press: 29–44.
- Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Random House.
- Jacobs, Steven. 2002. "Shreds of Boring Postcards: Toward a Posturban Aesthetics of the Generic and the Everyday." *Post Ex Sub Dis: Urban Fragmentations and Constructions*. 010 Publishers.
- Jacobson, Kirsten. 2009. "A Developed Nature: a Phenomenological Account of the Experience of Home." *Continental Philosophy Review* 42 (3). Springer Netherlands: 355–73.
- Jakob, Michaël. 2008. *Le Paysage*. Gollion: Infolio.
- Jaloux, Edmond, Ramuz, C. F., Landry, C. F., Simond, Daniel, and Martin, Germaine. 1945. *Lausanne*. Edited by Edmond Jaloux. Les presses de l'imprimerie centrale.
- Jammer, Max. 1969. *Concepts of Space*. Harvard University Press.
- Jay, Martin. 2002. "Cultural Relativism and the Visual Turn." *Journal of Visual Culture* 1 (3). SAGE Publications: 267–78.
- Kasinitz, Philip. 1995. *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times*. NYU Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 2007. *Critique of Judgement*. Oxford University Press.
- Kaplan, Rachel, and Kaplan, Stephen. 1989. *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective*. CUP Archive.
- Kaplan, Stephen. 1987. "Aesthetics, Affect, and Cognition Environmental Preference From an Evolutionary Perspective." *Environment and Behavior* 19 (1). SAGE Publications: 3–32.
- Keats, John. 1899. *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats*. Houghton, Mifflin and company.
- Kelsey, Robin Earle, and Stimson, Blake. 2008. *The Meaning of Photography*. Clark Art Institute.
- Kennedy, David. 2012. *Well of Being, The: Childhood, Subjectivity, and Education*. SUNY Press.
- Khamara, Edward J. 1993. "Leibniz' Theory of Space: a Reconstruction." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (173): 472.

- Kind, Amy. 2016. *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*. Routledge.
- Kohler, Florian, and Viktor Goebel. 2014. "Areas with Urban Character 2012." Neuchâtel: Federal Statistical Office (FSO).
- Konstantinović, Radomir. 1981. *Filosofija palanke*. Nolit, Beograd.
- Kraftl, Peter, John Horton, and Faith Tucker. 2014. "Children's Geographies," January. Oxford University Press.
- Kraus, Benjamin J, Brandon, Mark P, Robinson, Robert J., Connerney, Michael A., Hasselmo, Michael E., and Eichenbaum, Howard. 2015. "During Running in Place, Grid Cells Integrate Elapsed Time and Distance Run." *Neuron* 88 (3): 578–89.
- Kubler, George. 2008. *The Shape of Time*. Yale University Press.
- Kurki, Milja. 2007. Critical realism and causal analysis in international relations. *Millennium*, 35(2), pp.361-378.
- Lahire, Bernard. 2016. *Pour la sociologie*. La Découverte.
- Lampert, Jay. 2001. "Why Is There No Category of the City in Hegel's Aesthetics?." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (3). Oxford University Press: 312–24.
- Langer, Susanne K., 1953. *Feeling and form* (pp. 28-47). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Lapenta, Francesco. 2005. "The Image as a Form of Sociological Data : a Methodological Approach to the Analysis of Photoelicited Interviews." (Doctoral Dissertation). Goldsmiths College (University of London).
- Le Corbusier. 1973. *The Athens Charter*. Studio.
- Le Dinh, Diana. 1992. *Le Heimatschutz, Une Ligue Pour La Beauté: Esthétique Et Conscience Culturelle Au Début Du Siècle en Suisse*. Vol. 12. PU Romandes.
- Le Robert. 2016. *Le Robert Illustré & Son Dictionnaire en Ligne*.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1996. *Writings on Cities*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 2003. *The Urban Revolution*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Levinson, Jerrold. 2003. *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford University Press.
- Levitt, Helen, 1981. *A way of seeing*. Horizon Press.
- Lévy, Jacques. 1983. "Vers Le Concept Géographique De Ville." *Villes en Parallèle (Nanterre)*, no. n°7: 77–119.
- Lévy, Jacques. 1994. *L'espace Légitime. Sur la dimension géographique de la fonction politique*. Presses de la Fondation nationale pour les sciences politiques.
- Lévy, Jacques. 1996. "Une Géographie Vient Au Monde." *Le Débat*, no. 5: 43–57.
- Lévy, Jacques. 1999. *Le Tournant Géographique: Penser L'espace Pour Lire Le Monde*. Belin.
- Lévy, Jacques. 2004. "Serendipity." *Espaces Temps.Net, Mensuelles*. <http://espacestems.net/document519.html>.
- Lévy, Jacques. 2011. "La Sérendipité Comme Interaction Environnementale." *La Sérendipité : Le Hasard Heureux*. Hermann, 279–85.
- Lévy, Jacques and Lussault, Michel. 2013. *Dictionnaire De La Géographie Et De L'espace Des Sociétés*. Belin.
- Lévy, Jacques, 2014. "Inhabiting", in Roger Lee et al. eds, *The Sage Handbook of Human Geography*, London: Sage.
- Lévy, Jacques, Yves Déloye, and Florence Haegel. 1993. "Espace Intime, Espace Légitime ? Paris, L'Urbain, L'Urbanité." *Politix* 6 (21). Persée - Portail des revues scientifiques en SHS: 52–64.
- Longchamp, Jacques. 1989. *La Périurbanisation Dans L'Ouest Lémanique*. Université de

- Lausanne, Faculté des Lettres.
- Lorand, Ruth. 2007. "In defense of beauty." [On-line article] <http://aesthetics-online.org/articles/index>.
- Lothian, Andrew. 1999. "Landscape and the Philosophy of Aesthetics: Is Landscape Quality Inherent in the Landscape or in the Eye of the Beholder?." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 44 (4): 177–98.
- Löw, Martina. 2016. *The Sociology of Space*. New York: Springer.
- Lowenthal, David. 1968. "The American Scene." *Geographical Review* 58 (1): 61.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1970. "Soziologische Aufklärung." In *Soziologische Aufklärung* 1, 66–91. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1982. *Interaction, Organization, and Society*.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1984. *Soziale Systeme: Grundriß Einer Allgemeinen Theorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Luhmann, Niklas, Ziegert, Klaus A., and Kastner, Fatima. 2004. *Law as a social system*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 2002. *Einführung in Die Systemtheorie: Heidelberg: Carl Auer*.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1983. "Insistence on Systems Theory: Perspectives From Germany. An Essay." *Social Forces* 61 (4): 987.
- Lussault, Michel. 2007. *L'homme spatial: la construction sociale de l'espace humain*. Vol. 363. Seuil.
- Lussault, Michel, and Lévy, Jacques. 2000. "Actions !" *Logiques de l'espaces, esprit des lieux*. Belin.
- Lyons, Elizabeth. 1983. "Demographic Correlates of Landscape Preference." *Environment and Behavior* 15 (4). SAGE Publications: 487–511.
- Macé, Marielle. 2010. "Être Un Style." *Critique* n° 752-753 (1). Editions de Minuit: 11–23.
- Magilvy, J. K., Congdon, J. G., Nelson, J. P., and Craig, C.. 1992. "Vision of rural aging: Using photographic method in gerontology research." *Gerontological Society of America*, 22(2), 253-257.
- Malpas, Jeff. 2012. *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*. MIT Press.
- Mann, Thomas. 2012. *Death in Venice*. Courier Corporation.
- Margolis, Eric, and Luc Pauwels. 2011. *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*. SAGE.
- Markman, Keith D, William M P Klein, and Julie A Suhr. 2012. *Handbook of Imagination and Mental Simulation*. Psychology Press.
- Marris, Emma. 2011. *Rambunctious Garden*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Matthey, Laurent. 2008. *Le quotidien des systèmes territoriaux: lecture d'une pratique habitante: généalogie et description herméneutique des modalités de l'habiter en environnement urbain*. Peter Lang.
- Maturana, Humberto, and Poerksen, Bernhard. 2007. "Autopoiesis and social theory: A conversation." *Journal of sociocybernetics* 5, no. 1/2: 68-73.
- Maturana, Humberto R., and Varela, Francisco J.. 1991. *Autopoiesis and cognition: The realization of the living*. Vol. 42. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Mayntz, Renate. 2004. "Mechanisms in the Analysis of Social Macro-Phenomena." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34 (2). SAGE Publications: 237–59.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *Sense and Non-Sense. Translated, with a Pref. by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus*.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1945. *Phénoménologie De La Perception*. Gallimard.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1963. *The Structure of Behavior*. Trans. Alden Fisher. Beacon

- Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 1962. *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London; Humanities Press: New York.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Lefort, Claude. 1968. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, Johnson, Galen, and Smith, Michael. 1993. *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*. Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2001. *Psychologie et pédagogie de l'enfant*. Cours de Sorbonne, 1949-1952. Editions Verdier, 2001.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Welsh, Talia. 2010. *Child Psychology and Pedagogy*. Northwestern University Press.
- Michaels, Ralf. 2005. "The Functional Method of Comparative Law" *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Law* 339-382
- Michaud, Eric. 1997. *Fabriques De L'homme Nouveau: De Léger À Mondrian*. Editions Carré.
- Mingers, John. "Observing organizations: An Evaluation of Luhmann's Organization Theory." Bakken, Tore and Hernes, Tor, *Autopoietic Organization Theory: Drawing on Niklas Luhmanns Social Systems Perspective*. Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag, 103-22.
- Monad, Jacques. "Chance and Necessity: An Essay On the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology." Trans. A. Wainhouse. Knopf.
- Moore, J., Higham, L., Mountford-Zimdars, A., Ashley, L., Birkett, H., Duberley, J., & Kenny, E. 2016. *Socio-economic diversity in life sciences and investment banking*. Social Mobility Commission.
- Nasar, Jack L. 1983. "Adult Viewers' Preferences in Residential Scenes a Study of the Relationship of Environmental Attributes to Preference." *Environment and Behavior* 15 (5). SAGE Publications: 589–614.
- Navez-Bouchanine, Françoise. 2002. "La Fragmentation: Sources Et Définitions." *La Fragmentation en Question: Des Villes Entre Fragmentation Spatiale Et Fragmentation Sociale*, 45–104.
- Newman, Barnett, and O'Neill, John Philip. 1992. *Barnett Newman: selected writings and interviews*. University of California Press.
- Noguera, José Antonio. 2006. "Introduction : Why We Need an Analytical Sociological Theory." *Papers: Revista De Sociologia*, no. 80: 7–28.
- Northrop, Filmer S. C.. 1946. "Leibniz's Theory of Space." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 7(4), pp.422-446.
- Palmer, Richard E. 1969. *Hermeneutics*. Northwestern University Press.
- Pelaprat, Etienne, and Cole, Michael. 2011. "Minding the Gap?: Imagination, Creativity and Human Cognition." *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 45 (4). Springer-Verlag: 397–418.
- Perri, Trevor. 2013. "Image and Ontology in Merleau-Ponty." *Continental Philosophy Review* 46 (1). Springer Netherlands: 75–97.
- Petite, Mathieu. 2013. "Mountain Dwellers Versus Eco-Freaks." *Journal of Alpine Research | Revue De Géographie Alpine*, Rebond Le 11.
- Piaget, Jean. 1971. *Jugement Et Le Raisonnement Chez L'enfant [Le]*. Delachaux et Niestlé.
- Piaget, Jean. 1975. *Structuralism*. HUMANITAS.
- Pickel, Andreas. 2007. "Rethinking Systems Theory a Programmatic Introduction." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 37 (4). SAGE Publications: 391–407.
- Pol, Enric, Moreno, Emilia, Guàrdia, Joan, and Iniguez, Lupicinio. 2002. "Identity, quality of life, and sustainability in an urban suburb of Barcelona: adjustment to the

- city-identity-sustainability network structural model." *Environment and behavior* 34, no. 1 : 67-80.
- Porpora, Douglas., 2007. "Sociology's causal confusion." *Revitalizing causality: Realism about causality in philosophy and social science*, pp.195-204.
- Portugali, Juval. 2011. *Complexity, Cognition and the City*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Pred, Allan. 1984. "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 (2). Blackwell Publishing Ltd: 279–97.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1981. *Reason, Truth and History*. Cambridge University Press.
- Quintaneiro, Tânia. 2006. "The Concept of Figuration or Configuration in Norbert Elias' Sociological Theory." *Teoria & Sociedade* 2 (SE). Comissão Editorial: 0–0.
- Ralston, Shane J. 2011. *Holism*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Rescher, Nicolas. 1990. *Human Interests: Reflections on Philosophical Anthropology*. Stanford, Calif.:Stanford University Press.
- Retaillé, Denis. 1996. "La Vérité Des Cartes." *Le Débat* n° 92 (5). Gallimard: 87–98.
- Rérat, Patrick, Pigué, Etienne, Söderström, Ola, and Besson, R. 2010. *Back to the City. Étude de l'évolution démographique et de d'attractivité résidentielle des villes suisses*. 205-212.
- Riis, Jacob. 1901. *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the tenements of New York*. Penguin.
- Roeck, Bernd, Stercken, Martina, Walter, François, Jorio, Marco, and Manetsch, Thomas. 2013. *Portraits De Villes Suisses*. Chronos.
- Rolston, Holmes 1932. 1997. "Nature for Real: Is Nature a Social Construct?." Colorado State University. Libraries.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1938. *The Social Contract; And, Discourses: Translated with Introduction by G.D.H. Cole*. JM Dent & Sons.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1996. *The Confessions*. Wordsworth Editions.
- Ruskin, John. 2012. *The Elements of Drawing*. Courier Corporation.
- Ruso, Bernhart, Renninger, LeeAnn, and Atzwanger, Klaus. 2003. "Human Habitat Preferences: a Generative Territory for Evolutionary Aesthetics Research." In *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, 279–94. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Ruzicka-Rossier, Monique, and Mauron, Véronique. 2009. "Espace Public: Un Environnement Social." *Cahiers De l'ASPAN*, July. Nyon.
- Sagebiel, Juliane, and Vanhoefer, Edda. 2006. *Es könnte auch anders sein: Systemische Variationen der Teamberatung*. Carl-Auer-Verlag.
- Saito, Yuriko. 2015. "Aesthetics of the Everyday." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta.
- Salmon, Karen. 2001. "Remembering and Reporting by Children." *Clinical Psychology Review* 21 (2): 267–300.
- Salomon Cavin, J. 2005. *La Ville Mal-Aimée. Représentations Anti-Urbaines Et Aménagement Due Territoire en Suisse: Analyse, Comparaisons, Évolution*. Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques Et Universitaires Romandes.
- Santos, Milton. 1997. *La nature de l'espace: technique et temps, raison et émotion*. Editions L'Harmattan.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1967. "What Is Literature?" Translated by Bernard Frechtman.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, and Elkaïm-Sartre, Arlette. 2004. *The Imaginary: a Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. Psychology Press.
- Sawyer, Robert Keith. 2005. *Social emergence: Societies as complex systems*. Cambridge University Press.

- Schaeffer, Jean-Marie. 2015. *L'expérience esthétique*. Editions Gallimard.
- Scharpf, Fritz W. 1997. *Games Real Actors Play: Actor-Centered Institutionalism in Policy Research*. Westview Press.
- Schatten, Markus, and Bača, Miroslav. 2010. "A critical review of autopoietic theory and its applications to living, social, organizational and information systems." *Društvena istraživanja* 108 (109), 4-5.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. 1957. *The World as Will and Idea*. Trans. by R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp (1883, rpt. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), I, 328.
- Schwick, Christian. 2007. "Degree of Landscape Fragmentation in Switzerland." Federal Statistical Office (FSO).
- Schmid, Christian, Diener, Roger, Herzog, Jacques, Meili, Marcel, and Meuron, Pierre de. 2001. *Switzerland — an Urban Portrait*. Birkhäuser.
- Schütz, Alfred. 1944. "The stranger: An essay in social psychology." *American journal of Sociology* 49.6, 499-507.
- Schwanitz, Dietrich. 1995. "Systems Theory According to Niklas Luhmann: Its Environment and Conceptual Strategies." *Cultural Critique*, no. 30: 137.
- Scruton, Roger. 2007. "In Search of the Aesthetic." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 47 (3): 232–50.
- Scruton, Roger. 1973. *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind*. University of Cambridge.
- Scruton, Roger. 1979. *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. Vol. 7. Princeton University Press Princeton, NJ.
- Searle, John R. 2006. "Social Ontology Some Basic Principles." *Anthropological Theory* 6 (1). SAGE Publications: 12–29.
- Secchi, Bernardo, and Ingallina, Patrizia. 2006. *Première Leçon D'urbanisme*. Parenthèses.
- Sekula, Allan. 1982. "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning." In *Thinking Photography*, 84–109. London: Macmillan Education UK.
- Shafer, Elwood Jr. and Richards, Thomas. 1974. "A Comparison of Viewer Reactions to Outdoor Scenes and Photographs of Those Scenes". Res. Pap. Ne-302. Upper Darby, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station. 26 p.
- Sieverts, Thomas. 2000. *Zwischenstadt: Zwischen Ort Und Welt, Raum Und Zeit, Stadt Und Land*. Vol. 118. Walter de Gruyter.
- Simmel, Georg. 1997. "On the Essence of Culture." *Simmel On Culture*. London: Sage. 40-5.
- Simmel, Georg., 2007. "The metaphysics of death." *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(7-8), pp.72-77.
- Simmel, Georg. 1991. "The Problem of Style." *Theory, Culture & Society* 8 (3): 63–71.
- Smith, David Woodruff, and McIntyre, Ronald. 1982. *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language*. Vol. 154. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Smith, David Woodruff. 2016. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N Zalta. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/phenomenology/>.
- Soja, Edward. 1996. *Thirdspace*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sontag, Susan. 1975. "Fascinating Fascism." *Under the Sign of Saturn*. 73, 105,
- Stamps, Arthur E, III. 1991. "Comparing Preferences of Neighbors and a Neighborhood Design Review Board." *Environment and Behavior* 23 (5). SAGE Publications: 616–29.
- Stanczak, Gregory C. 2007. *Visual Research Methods*. SAGE Publications.

- Stock, Mathis. 2006. "L'hypothèse de l'habiter poly-topique: pratiquer les lieux géographiques dans les sociétés à individus mobiles." *Espaces Temps.net*
- Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet M. Corbin. 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Ströker, Elisabeth. *Investigations in philosophy of space*. Vol. 11. Ohio University Press, 1987.
- Tagg, John. 1988. *The burden of representation: Essays on photographs and histories*. Vol. 80. University of Minnesota Press.
- Talen, Emily, and Cliff Ellis. 2002. "Beyond Relativism Reclaiming the Search for Good City Form." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 22 (1). SAGE Publications: 36–49.
- Tatarkiewicz, Wladyslaw. 1972. "The Great Theory of Beauty and Its Decline." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (2): 165.
- Templin, Patricia Scheyer. 1978. "Still Photography: Can It Provide Program Portrayal?" Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association* (62nd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 27-31, 1978)
- Foucault, Michel, 1977. "An aesthetics of existence." *Politics, philosophy, culture: Interviews and other writings*, 1984, pp.47-53.
- Thayer, Robert L., and Atwood, Brian G.. 1978. "Plants, Complexity, and Pleasure in Urban and Suburban Environments." *Environmental Psychology and Nonverbal Behavior* 3 (2). Kluwer Academic Publishers-Human Sciences Press: 67–76.
- Thomas, Marie-Paule, and Pattaroni, Luca. "Choix résidentiels et différenciation des modes de vie des familles de classes moyennes en Suisse." *Espaces et sociétés* (1): 111-127.
- Thornes, John E. 2004. "The Visual Turn and Geography (Response to Rose 2003 Intervention)." *Antipode* 36 (5). Blackwell Publishing Ltd/Inc.: 787–94.
- Tomasello, Michael. 2008. "How Are Humans Unique?." *New York Times*, May.
- Tonkiss, Fran. 2014. *Cities by Design*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand. 1988. *Community and Society*. Transaction Publishers.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2009. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Uhel, Ronan. 2006. "Urban Sprawl in Europe: The Ignored Challenge." *EAA Report* 10 (2): 2006.
- Ulrich, Roger S. 1981. "Natural Versus Urban Scenes Some Psychophysiological Effects." *Environment and Behavior* 13 (5). SAGE Publications: 523–56.
- Vailati, Ezio. 1997. *Leibniz and Clarke*. Oxford University Press.
- Van Den Hende, Anthe. 2015. "Settling and Dwelling in the Swiss Peri-Urban Areas: Residential Trajectories and Life Course Events." University of Geneva.
- van Iterson, Ad. 2002. *The Civilized Organization: Norbert Elias and the Future of Organization Studies*. Vol. 10. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Verschraegen, Gert. 2002. "Human rights and modern society: a sociological analysis from the perspective of systems theory." *Journal of Law and Society* 29.2: 258-281.
- Voloshinov, Valentin Nikolaevich, Matejka, Ladislav, and Titunik, I. R.. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language [by] VN Volosinov*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and IR Titunik." Seminar Press.
- von Bonsdorff, Pauline. 2009. "Aesthetic of childhood: Phenomenology and beyond." *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 1: 84-100.
- Vygotsky, Lev Semenovich. 2004. "Imagination and creativity in childhood." *Journal of Russian & East European Psychology*, 42(1), pp.7-97.
- Walter, François. 1994. *La Suisse Urbaine 1750-1950*. Éditions Zoé.
- Wan, Poe Yu-Ze. 2013. *Reframing the Social: Emergentist Systemism and Social Theory*.

- Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Wan, Poe Yu-ze. 2012. "Analytical sociology: A Bungean appreciation." *Science & Education* 21.10: 1545-1565.
- Wang, Caroline C., and Redwood-Jones, Yanique A.. 2001. "Photovoice Ethics: Perspectives From Flint Photovoice." *Health Education & Behavior* 28 (5). SAGE Publications: 560–72.
- Weinger, Susan. 2013. "Children Living in Poverty: Their Perception of Career Opportunities." *Families in Society: the Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 79 (3). Alliance for Children and Families: 320–30.
- Werner, Karla. 1991. Fragmentation and juncture. *Architecture and Behaviour/ Architecture et Comportement*, 7(4).
- Wimsatt, William C., 2007. "Appendix C: Glossary of key concepts and assumptions." *Re-Engineering philosophy for limited beings: Piecewise approximations to reality*, pp.353-60.
- Wirth, Louis, 1938. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." *American Journal of Sociology*, 44(1), pp.1-24.
- Wirth, Louis. 1940. "The urban society and civilization." *American Journal of Sociology*, 45(5), pp.743-755.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958. *The blue and brown books*. Basil Blackwell Oxford.
- Wollheim, Richard. 1980. *Art and Its Objects*. Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
- Wright, John K. 1947. "Terra Incognita: the Place of the Imagination in Geography." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 37(1), 1-15.
- Wüst, Thomas. 2013. *Urbanität: ein Mythos und sein Potential*. Springer-Verlag.
- Zittoun, Tania, and Frédéric Cerchia. 2013. "Imagination as Expansion of Experience." *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 47 (3). Springer US: 305–24.
- Young, Marion, 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press.
- Zube, Ervin, Pitt, David, and Anderson, Thomas. 1975. "Perception and Prediction of Scenic Resource Values of the Northeast." *Landscape Assessment: Values, Perceptions, & Resources*. EH Zube, RO Brush & JG Fabos, Eds.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 2004. *The Reality of the Virtual*. Edited by Ben Wright.

Curriculum Vitae

Mirza Tursić
Avenue des Alpes 6
1006 Lausanne
Switzerland

+ 41 77 480 05 84
mirza_tursic@hotmail.com
mirzaturtic.com

Architect and urban scientist

Work experience

September 2013 / April 2017

Doctoral research at Chôros Laboratory

Institute of Architecture and the City, EPFL, Lausanne, Switzerland

My Ph.D. dissertation entitled *Aesthetic Space: The Visible and the Invisible in Urban Agency* is carried out under a supervision of Prof. Jacques Lévy, urbanist and geographer.

Teaching: Master course in architecture, EPFL

Sciences of the City: Public space and photography

Sciences of the City I: Public space and cartography and Sciences of the City II: Public space and cinema.

Communication and graphic work, EPFL

Interdisciplinary academic project PostCarWord (EPFL, ETH, USI), international conference Géopoint16, EDAR website – in French and English.

August 2011 / August 2013

Architect and construction site coordinator

Arhitekting.tns, architectural office, Tuzla

Coordination, work supervision and technical support for the construction of *Avaz-Robot Centre*, group of commercial and residential buildings in Tuzla.

September 2009 / October 2010

Architect

Širbegovic Engineering, construction company, Sarajevo

Involved with the design of various projects in the stage of preliminary design and construction design. Project leader for projects in Bosnia, Macedonia and Kuwait.

The full portfolio accessible on: mirzaturtic.com

Formation

May 2017

Doctoral degree, to be defended 16 May 2017
École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

2007 – 2009

Master of architecture - Graduate engineer of architecture
Faculty of architecture Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo

2004 – 2007

Bachelor of architecture
Faculty of architecture Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo

Publications and Presentations

- M. Tursic. *Aesthetics and Urbanity*. 15th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia. The Horizontal Metropolis. Imagining the Territory., Vento di Venezia, Isola della Certosa, 2016.
- M. Tursic. *Aesthetics – as a dimension of society and a component of spatial theory*. Géopoint16. De l'espace pour la théorie !, Lausanne, Suisse, 2016.
- M. Tursic. *Urbanities and their landscapes*. Séminaire Sge - 2016 Le paysage urbain, Pavillon sicli / 45, route des Acacias - 1227 Acacias - Genève, 2016.
- M. Tursic. *Aesthetics and Spatial Practices. The Example of Switzerland*. The Horizontal Metropolis: A Radical Project VIII International PHD Seminar 'URBANISM & URBANIZATION', Lausanne, Suisse, 2015.

Software

2D and 3D design: AutoCAD, Allplan, 3ds Max
Image editing: Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and Lightroom
Office suite: MS Office

Languages

French: Excellent mastery C2
English: Excellent mastery C2
Bosnian: Native speaker

