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# Forever Young

Celebrating 50 Years of the World Heritage Convention

edited by

Elisa Baroncini, Bert Demarsin, Ana Gemma López Martín,  
Raquel Regueiro Dubra, Ruxandra-Iulia Stoica

with the collaboration of

Manuel Ganarin and Alessandra Quarta

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Via Jugoslavia, 14 - 41122 Modena

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RUXANDRA-IULIA STOICA

## CULTURAL VALUES IN URBAN CONSERVATION: ETIC AND EMIC PERSPECTIVES\*

**Abstract:** The form, structure, and *modus operandi* of historic urban areas are inextricably linked between them, reflecting the essence and dynamics of society. Cultural values of historic urban areas and their theoretical construction can be determined in the light of what linguists and anthropologists call the etic and emic dimensions of systems of meaning. This dichotomic concept was coined by linguist Kenneth Pike in 1954 and transmuted to cultural anthropology by Marvin Harris in 1964; since then, it has proved a very useful heuristic device for many disciplines and has been used in many senses (universal vs. specific, objective vs. subjective, outsider vs. insider, ideal vs. actual, ethnological vs. ethnographic). In the case of urban heritage, this etic/emic approach situates values between a *meta*-discourse on the tangible features of the urban fabric and their meaning, and a *speci(fic)*-discourse on the specificity of urban fabric and its cultural construction and significance. The two discourses are both concerned with recognising and understanding the identity of the urban fabric, and ideally complement each other: the first category of objective values is rooted in history and theory of urbanism and our desire to create better places for living, while the second of specificity, is rooted in anthropology and an understanding of cultural diversity through hermeneutics of space. The evaluation of the urban context for the purpose of identifying what is urban heritage and what are its values should attempt to examine it through both perspectives, in order to ensure a comprehensive, if not exhaustive, investigation. This means that, beside the well-established comparative, typological and morphological methods of architecture and urban history, that represent an objective, etic perspective, attention should be paid to the more relative, emic perspective produced by the societies who in fact build and use a particular urban context.

### *Introduction*

Never before have we dealt with so many categories and types of heritage as there is increased recognition of the many forms in which heritage gives identity and meaning to communities and so-

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\* Double-blind peer reviewed content.

ciety as a whole. One category in particular is proving challenging: urban heritage, which is increasingly understood since 1960s as a complex system of built fabric and community rather than the summa of its structures. In contrast with earlier national legislations, the 1972 World Heritage Convention and its list of criteria for assessing Outstanding Universal Value are explicitly referring to ‘interchange of human values’, ‘cultural traditions’, ‘living traditions’, in addition to typically references to the tangible and physical values of heritage. Recently, international pilot programs have tested people-centred heritage approaches in diverse cultural and organisational contexts: People and Heritage run by ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property); Nature-Culture: The World Heritage Leadership partnership between IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) and ICCROM; Panorama – solutions for a Healthy Planet developed by IUCN and GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH). Zooming in on urban heritage and its community dimension, this paper examines how cultural values of historic urban areas and their theoretical construction can be determined in the light of what linguists and anthropologists call the etic and emic dimensions of systems of meaning.

### *Value Judgements*

Traditionally, architecture and urban history have built up their own canons for judging architecture and urbanism, but these also were subject to change over time - this explaining the (sometimes widely) differing attitudes towards the historic urban fabric. While in use, however, these canons represented the authoritative way of identifying the values of the historic and contemporary urban fabric. So, the way in which changes in the society have an impact on to the urban fabric can be seen in its changing value judgements.

In philosophy, a key issue of axiology<sup>1</sup> is the rational status of these value judgements<sup>2</sup>. This displays three key positions: one in which value judgements are *absolute* or *objective* on the basis of either divine or other authority, either standards that rationally or otherwise transcend human decision or divine authority; another position is that value judgements are *relative* social constructs or conventions and consequently their relevance is limited, specific; and yet another position considers value judgements completely *subjective* non-rational expressions of personal preference and therefore of no more than personal relevance<sup>3</sup>. It is important to note that, in fact, these categories only exist through each other.

Leaving aside the third position, which is unsuitable for a programmatic analysis due to its very limited scope and subjectivity (nevertheless its potential of influencing the first two categories should not be ignored), the first two positions are indeed relevant for an attempt at quantifying and qualifying the 'resistance of the city to change', to the extent to which value judgements are intrinsic to the urban context, in both its production and perception. The evaluation of the urban context for the purpose of identifying what is urban heritage and what are its values should attempt to examine it through each of these positions to ensure a comprehensive, if not exhaustive, investigation. This means, beside the well-established comparative, typological and morphological methods of architecture and urban history that represent an 'objective' value judgement, attention should be paid to the more 'relative' value judgements produced by the societies who in fact build and use a particular urban context. These value judgements will be, of course, beyond any typology that can be constructed through a cross-cultural comparison and might seem meaningless or difficult to make

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<sup>1</sup> Axiology is the epistemology of values.

<sup>2</sup> The two main branches of axiology, ethics and aesthetics, are isomorphic from this point of view.

<sup>3</sup> D. CARR, *Values in the Arts and Architecture: From Aesthetics to Ethics* (Paper presented at PROKALÓ Postgraduate Seminar Series in Architecture, The University of Edinburgh, 2004/2005).



sense of for professionals, unless they are themselves members of that society.

So, on one hand we have professionals using established typologies elaborated by architectural and urban history, but who are prone to identify only those values of the urban context that they are looking for – «reason only perceives that which it produces after its own design»<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand we have the society that produces and uses the urban context and takes the aforementioned values as identified by specialists as granted, intrinsic, but at the same time have intimate knowledge of the specificity of the urban fabric in a way in which is not possible for an outsider. However, communities encounter difficulty in spelling out these values, although reacting and protesting if they were affected by any malign intervention<sup>5</sup>. This distinction between what we perceive as intrinsic values and what as specificity has been defined in Medieval philosophy by John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308): *quidditas*<sup>6</sup>, the essential nature of a thing – based on the meaning defined in antique philosophy by Aristotle – and *haecceitas*<sup>7</sup>, the individual nature of a thing – to define a non-qualitative property of a thing.

### *Etic and emic dimensions*

A method taking into consideration both these points of view has been developed for the study of languages first, and then cultures, a fact which renders it worthy of consideration for the study of the values of the urban context as manifestation of a particular culture. But for this, it is paramount that the urban context is re-

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<sup>4</sup> I. KANT, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Henry G. Bohn, London, 1855, p. xxvii.

<sup>5</sup> One method aiming so far to address this issue is participatory urbanism, but it is a rather empirical method and therefore its results depend widely on a large number of variables.

<sup>6</sup> Quiddity, what-ness.

<sup>7</sup> Haecceity, this-ness.

garded as an interdependence between its spatial/formal and social/political dimensions. In this respect, this paper investigates how the cultural values of historic urban areas and their theoretical construction can be determined in the light of what linguists and anthropologists call the etic and emic dimensions of systems of meaning. This dichotomic concept was coined by linguist Kenneth Pike in 1954<sup>8</sup> and transmuted to cultural anthropology by Marvin Harris in 1964<sup>9</sup>; since then it has proved a very useful heuristic device for many disciplines<sup>10</sup> and it has been used in many senses (universal vs. specific, objective vs. subjective, outsider vs. insider, ideal vs. actual, ethnological vs. ethnographic).

In the case of urban heritage, this etic/emic approach situates values between a *meta*-discourse – corresponding to the *absolute* value judgement in axiology – on the desirable features of the urban fabric and their meaning and a *speci(fic)*-discourse – corresponding to the *relative* value judgement – on the specificity of urban fabric and its cultural construction and significance. The two discourses are both concerned with recognising and understanding the identity of the urban fabric, and ideally complement each other: the first category of objective values is rooted in history and theory of urbanism and our desire to create better places for living, while the second, of specificity, is rooted in anthropology and an understanding of cultural diversity through hermeneutics of space.

On one hand, there are values in architecture and urbanism that can be identified cross-culturally and seem to be related to the very nature of architecture and urbanism as human agency. Therefore, the ‘*meta*-discourse’ presupposes a philosophical perspective towards values as principles. This is characteristic for the typological approach in architectural and urban history. This means methods

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<sup>8</sup> K.L. PIKE, *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behavior*, The Hague, Mouton, 1967.

<sup>9</sup> M. HARRIS, *The Nature of Cultural Things*, Random House, New York, 1964.

<sup>10</sup> *Emics and etics: the insider/outsider debate*, edited by T.N. HEADLAND, K.L. PIKE, M. HARRIS, Sage Publications, Newbury Park-London, 1990, pp. 13-27.

external to each specific culture are used, and therefore only those aspects that are comparable from one culture to another are identified and assessed. This limits in a way this approach to the study of the physical reality of the urban texture and leaves unexplored those aspects that are specific constructions of a given culture.

On the other hand, there are exactly these aspects mentioned above that are the result of specific cultural circumstances that affect the urban environment as a side-effect. These determine the '*speci*-discourse' as an anthropological approach aiming to reveal values, both existing and also latent, as created and experienced by the urban communities themselves. By considering both these discourses, this chapter seeks to uncover some of the key issues and processes that shaped the historic urban fabric to become what we perceive now as urban discursivity.

The etic approach leads to generalised, non-structural observations about the urban texture. The etic perspective relies on extrinsic concepts and categories that have meaning only for scientific observers, these being the only able to judge the accuracy and validity of an etic account of the values of the urban fabric. It is an attempt to identify and decipher its values in relation to a more general classification, which has been a recurrent concern of architectural and urban theory over time. As a result specific characteristics are only identified as variations of cross-cultural typologies, and even when singular manifestations are observed they are only explained in relation to these general classifications. This approach, therefore, while putting a specific urban fabric within its wider context of urban manifestations, actually hinders the possibility of putting it in its own cultural context.

Beside these inner, objective values of the urban fabric, there is also the result of 'happening', of specific spatial or temporal circumstances which affect the urban environment as a side-effect. The '*speci*-discourse' is thus determined through an anthropological approach aiming to reveal values, both existing and latent, as experienced by urban communities. Urban space is essentially an existential space: human existence in the urban space is dependant of

a mental image of it, which should be coherent and offer a multitude of senses and interpretations at different levels of understanding. Urban fabric has, therefore, its own identity and a structured, not chaotic, complexity, which can be read through the eyes of its inhabitants.

The specificity of urban fabric and its historical and theoretical meanings can reveal how place confers identity to humans and vice-versa. In contrast to the etic *meta*-discourse, the emic *speci*-discourse is only valid for one place at a time, being therefore idiosyncratically incomparable. The *speci*-discourse is an attempt to identify and explain the cultural structure<sup>11</sup> of a specific urban fabric by analysing how the different values constructing it in our perception are related to each other.

Therefore, the hierarchy of urban form – buildings, plots, squares and streets – is culturally determined and differs from one culture to another or from one period to another for the same culture. The emic approach seeks what is the inner hierarchy of a community and how is that reflected in the urban form.

### *Geometrical space vs. anthropological space*

The mental image of the urban space is at the basis of this emic approach and observes several levels of interpretation of space from Plato and Aristotle to Kant, Einstein, and Norberg-Schulz' six levels of spatial concepts. For Plato geometry is the science of space, while Aristotle reckons space as the sum of all places, a dynamic field with directions and qualitative properties. Kant considers space as a basic category for the *a priori* human understanding. Einstein opposed to the homogenous Euclidean space a space in which direction and geometry is a straightforward result of human perception and not at all natural. This is the break between the concrete physical space

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<sup>11</sup> If we admit that urban fabric is culturally structured, whether it is traditional or planned.

and the abstract mathematical one. Furthermore, Christian Norberg-Schulz mentions six levels of spatial concepts: the pragmatic space of physical action; the perceptive space of instant orientation; the existential space which gives the image of the environment; the cognitive space of physical world; the abstract space of logical relationships which has the capacity of describing the previous ones; the artistic or expressive space created by artists, architects and urbanists. While before there were two major spatial theories – one concerned with the Euclidian abstract geometrical space which omits the subject, and the other with the human psychological perception of space which puts the subject in the centre of it – Norberg-Schulz approached urban space as existential space by taking into consideration both its geometrical and also human dimensions at the same time<sup>12</sup>. The urban structure is primarily determined by human activity, and at this level we have the place that confers identity to humans.

In his essay *La rebelión de las masas*, when discussing the broader problem of the implications of «who rules the world» for the structuring of the society<sup>13</sup>, and indeed its cities, Jose Ortega y Gasset ascertains the formation of the Graeco-Roman city-state epitomizes the principle of the State as a genuine creation in which the equilibrium between the «internal» and the «external» is lost, with the latter taking over. He might be exaggerating when saying that «the *urbs* or the *polis* starts by being an empty space, the forum, the agora, and all the rest is just a means of fixing that empty space, of limiting its outlines»<sup>14</sup>; nevertheless this subsumes the importance of that ‘empty space’ for the urban environment: one more

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<sup>12</sup> C. NORBERG-SCHULZ. *Existence, space and architecture*, Praeger Publishers, NY and Washington, 1971.

<sup>13</sup> «the substance or character of a new historical period is the resultant of internal variations – of man and his spirit; or of external variations – formal, and as it were mechanical. Amongst these last, the most important, almost without a doubt, is the displacement of power. But this brings with it a displacement of spirit», in J. ORTEGA Y GASSETT, *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930), W.W. Norton, New York-London, 1994, Chapter XIV: *Who Rules the World?*

<sup>14</sup> J. ORTEGA Y GASSETT, *The Revolt of the Masses*, cit., Chapter XIV.

reason, perhaps, for urban conservation being concerned with the more complex structures and relationships within the urban environment rather than merely its separate elements – be they houses, ensembles, streets or even conservation areas, if isolated from the entirety of the urban organism. Ortega y Gasset stresses here the very substance of the *synœcism*, emphasising the invention through it of the purely human space, clearly delimited from nature, and therefore characterized by an abstract, socio-political dimension: «The *polis* is not primarily a collection of habitable dwellings, but a meeting-place for citizens, a space set apart for public functions. ... Observe that this signifies nothing less than the invention of a new kind of space, much more new than the space of Einstein»<sup>15</sup>. This points out that the values of the urban environment should be sought also elsewhere rather than solely in purely physical qualities, i.e. intangible values intrinsic to the city as tangible manifestation of the *synœcism*. In this way, urban space is defined as an existential space, in which human existence takes place and forms its own identity: humans shape the urban space while this, in return, shapes human existence. These processes result in the construction a mental image of the urban space and its limits able to offer multiple meanings and allowing for interpretation at many different levels of understanding. This means the very concept of urban space has existential roots, its complexity being basically defined by its orientation and contained human actions<sup>16</sup>. In this sense, the urban space is ultimately described by the Platonic concept of *chōra* (χώρα).

Plato distinguishes notions of space between *chōra* and *topos* (τόπος). Timaeus, who accounts the creation of the cosmos by a divine craftsman, says one needs three basic principles to explain the *kosmos*, the world order: *being, becoming*<sup>17</sup> (in both actuality and also potentiality), and *receptacle of coming-into-being* (dynamic no-

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<sup>15</sup> J. ORTEGA Y GASSETT, *The Revolt of the Masses*, cit., Chapter XIV.

<sup>16</sup> C. NORBERG-SCHULZ, *Existence, space and architecture*, cit, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Note the relation to Aristotle's understanding of process as becoming rather than being.

tion) = *space* (*chōra*). Conversely, Aristotle<sup>18</sup> does not generally distinguish between *chōra* and *topos* (but is it the matter out of which the physical objects are composed – as Aristotle suggested<sup>19</sup> – or is it the space in which physical objects are located? Timaeus never calls it matter [*hulē*])<sup>20</sup>. Hence, coming into being and destruction require bodies entering into and departing from something: that is *chōra*. Beside this, Timaeus explains that what comes-into-being in some place (*topos*), although *chōra* provides the seat (*hedra*) for everything that comes-into-being. But it is not necessary that everything is somewhere in some place and occupies some space (the role of the receptacle is restricted to what comes-into-being)<sup>21</sup>. However, Plato uses the term *topos*, *chōra* and *hedra* as being interchangeable to some extent<sup>22</sup>. But Zeno the Stoic and Epicurus make clear distinction between the meanings of *topos*, *topos*, *chōra*, and *kenon* (κενόν): *topos* is the fully occupied space, *topos*, *chōra* is the partly (after Zeno) or temporary (after Epicurus) occupied space, and *kenon* is the empty space<sup>23</sup>. These are names of the same thing, intangible substance in different conditions. By being partly or temporary occupied space, *chōra* emphasises the notion of ‘possibility’<sup>24</sup>, a reality between the absolute of the universal ideas and the concrete of the substance, it is an enabler, and it is the possibility of becoming. As Alberto Pérez-Gomez puts it in his interpretation of the Platonic meaning in *Timaeus*, *chōra* is the «mimetic re-

<sup>18</sup> «Aristotle remarks that Plato identifies the receptacle and *chōra*, and he sees that the *chōra* of Plato’s discussion is (i) that which is supposed to persist during elemental change in such a way as to define the change, (ii) that which receives form, and (iii) what underlies an object: in other words, he sees that *chōra* is Plato’s candidate for what the matter of something is». B. MORISON, *On Location: Aristotle’s Concept of Space*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> ARISTOTLE, *On Generation and corruption*.

<sup>20</sup> T.K. JOHANSEN, *Plato’s natural philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 117-136.

<sup>21</sup> T.K. JOHANSEN, *Plato’s natural philosophy*, cit., pp. 117-127.

<sup>22</sup> T.K. JOHANSEN, *Plato’s natural philosophy*, cit., pp. 127-130.

<sup>23</sup> T.K. JOHANSEN, *Plato’s natural philosophy*, cit., p. 128.

<sup>24</sup> H.G. LIDDELL, R. SCOTT, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (13.08.2006)

ceptacle for truly human action (as opposed to animalized behavior), and yet reducible to neither natural substances nor universal ideas»<sup>25</sup>. To him, this understanding makes *chōra* the realm of language and art, the cultural reality, whose essence is its incredible diversity for a unique biological species.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the two icons in the exonartex of the Chora Monastery in Byzantium representing the Christ Pantocrator and the Virgin bear the inscriptions «land/dwelling place (*chōra*) of the living» and «container/dwelling place (*chōra*) of the uncontainable» respectively<sup>26</sup>. These phrases come from biblical and liturgical texts<sup>27</sup>, and their mystical sense seems to refer to exactly the same kind of receptacle that allows coming into being as the Platonic concept of *chōra*. It seems relevant that the second group of more concrete meanings of the word *chōra* comprises the territory of the settlement/city (archaeology of Ancient Greece), the centre of the city/village, as well as the main settlement/city of an island<sup>28</sup>. These other meanings seem to hint to an application of the concept of receptacle to the political and architectural structures of the society.

In this way, the Platonic concept of *chōra* best describes urban space, which is not simply a place or matter, but a receptacle, a me-

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<sup>25</sup> A. PÉREZ-GÓMEZ, *Architecture and Ethics beyond Globalization* (Unpublished), Simpson Lecture at the University of Edinburgh, 5 June 2003, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> These inscriptions are recurrent on many other early fourteenth century mosaics in the church (the earliest parts of which may date from the sixth century, but it is not yet known how early might have been erected the first sacred building of this name on the site). P.A. UNDERWOOD, *The Kariye Djami*, Volume 1: *Historical Introduction and Description of the Mosaics and Frescoes*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967, pp. 3-8.

<sup>27</sup> P.A. UNDERWOOD, *The Kariye Djami*, cit., pp. 39-41.

<sup>28</sup> And these meanings also extended to country, its land or its people at Herodotus, and even country-side at Herodotus. A. BAILLY, *Abrege du dictionnaire Grec-Français*, Hachette, Paris, 1901, p. 970.

Although the etymology of the name of Chora Monastery is commonly explained as coming from this last meaning of *chōra*, being outside the city-walls of Bizantium in the time of Constantine, but later being within the wall of Theodosius, it is clear that the fourteenth century mosaics employ the more abstract meanings of this term. Whether that was the case from the very beginning cannot be categorically affirmed or rejected.



dium, a possibility. It is not limited to *topos*, but allows a process of becoming to take place: it is not finite matter with a crystallised structure and defined form, but rather something much more than this. The potentiality and dynamicity implied by the term *chōra* are exactly those qualities that differentiate the living urban space, where urbanity is naturally manifest, from inert, rigid planned environments, within which if urbanity takes place, it is more often despite rather than due to urban planning and design.

The concept of *chōra* has already been transmuted to architectural theory to show the cultural dimension of the man-made space, doubly coded: in its making and in its perception.

«Architectural expression in the space of *chora*, understood as cultural space but also the space of human appearance, the space of the city beyond classical definitions, may thus gather the fourfold in a non-escapist way, revealing the mystery of depth that makes us human (rather than a prosaic third dimension), the mystery of Merleau-Ponty's "flesh" (rather than a world split into objective and subjective realms in which space is objective and time is merely a subjective effect of repetition or a construction of absent instants)»<sup>29</sup>.

ALBERTO PÉREZ-GÓMEZ, *Dwelling on Heidegger: Architecture as mimetic techno-poiesis* (1998)<sup>30</sup>.

Flesh is used by Merleau-Ponty as being simultaneously inner and outer, at the limit between the body and its surroundings (in a way, like Aristotle's concept of place): perceiving and being the ob-

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<sup>29</sup> A. PÉREZ-GÓMEZ, *Dwelling on Heidegger: Architecture as mimetic techno-poiesis*, in *International Journal of Architectural Theory*, 1998, 2 ([www.tu-cottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/Wolkeleng/Subjects/982/Perez-Gomez/perez-gomez\\_t.html](http://www.tu-cottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/Wolkeleng/Subjects/982/Perez-Gomez/perez-gomez_t.html)).

<sup>30</sup> Simon Richards quotes Frampton saying «the establishment of an articulate realm on which man or men may come into being». And claims he was borrowing from Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958), when calling this 'the space of human appearance'.

ject of perception<sup>31</sup>. Urban space is defined by human agency in non-material as well as material ways.

The issue of existential space has been studied by psychologists since late nineteenth century and revealed that human perception of space is subjective, being highly dependent by the motivation and past experience of the subject, existence is perceived as a sum of events in four-dimensional space. Spatial adaptation is defined as a state of equilibrium between assimilation – the subject's action upon the environment – and accommodation – the environment's action upon the subject. Therefore, the understanding of space (which is a chiefly learning process for humans, as opposed to the animal's instinctive sense of space, and therefore can be culturally influenced) presupposes a gradually formed mental image, which is different from instantaneous spatial perception, and is socially and culturally conditioned, resulting in the human's mental image of his environment.

### *Subjectivity of human perception*

Kevin Lynch<sup>32</sup> has coined the concept of 'place legibility' in order to measure the human perception of the urban environment. While his research highlighted a number of physical elements, the network of which contributes to the forming of a mental image, it does not address the question of the quality of the urban environment, in so far as the clarity of a structure is not necessarily a virtue in itself. His research sought to identify those elements that determine the ease of reading the urban environment for a specific cultural group. While his results are indeed valuable for defining the identity of place in the cultural context he had researched, subsequent practice and policy has unsupportedly extended the validity of his observations to city planning operations globally, i.e. out-

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<sup>31</sup> M. MERLEAU-PONTY, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1961), Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 1968.

<sup>32</sup> K. LYNCH, *The image of the city*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960.

side the said cultural group. On the contrary, in a different cultural framework the legibility of space might have different elements contributing to it and might even not play an important role at all for the way a different cultural group perceives the quality of space and the values that add up to it.

Michel de Certeau's chapter *Ghosts in the City* observes the symptomatic metamorphosis of an urbanism focused on inventing new urban spaces into «a rehabilitation of national heritage», «an uncanniness of the "Already There"»<sup>33</sup>. But when Anthony Vidler applied to the built environment Freud's concept of '*unheimlich*'<sup>34</sup>, he brought a new perspective and level of reading of the historical illegible and therefore uncanny remainder within the legible modernist city<sup>35</sup>.

The anthropological understanding of space, pioneered by Georg Simmel's sociology of space<sup>36</sup> and Otto Bollnow's anthropology of space<sup>37</sup>, goes already far beyond a geometrical-physical one, but it is the concept of proxemics coined by Edward T. Hall<sup>38</sup> that gives it its real breadth. Hall reveals how our perception of space is determined culturally to a great extent, whether consciously or not, despite the fact that it is acquired physically through the same sensorial apparatus. This is why Hall, while developing his theory of proxemics, refers to the cultural dimension as 'the hidden dimension' of space, the one that gives the measure of the identification between people and their urban environment. He extrap-

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<sup>33</sup> M. DE CERTEAU, L. GIARD, P. MAYOL, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Volume 2: *Living and Cooking*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1998, pp. 136-144.

<sup>34</sup> S. FREUD, *The 'Uncanny'* (1919), in *Art and literature: Jensen's Gradiva. Leonardo da Vinci, and other works*, edited by A. DICKSON, The Pelican Freud Library vol.14, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, pp. 335-376.

<sup>35</sup> R. KOOLHAS, *Delirious New York: a Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1978.

<sup>36</sup> G. SIMMEL, *The Sociology of Space and On the Spatial Projections of Social Forms* (1903), in G. SIMMEL, D. FRISBY, M. FEATHERSTONE, *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, Sage Publications, London; Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1997.

<sup>37</sup> O.FR. BOLLNOW. *Mensch und Raum*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> E.T. HALL, *The Hidden Dimension*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1966.

olates his observations about people's attitudes and expectations about space at a personal level to the level of the urban texture. It is indeed a valuable tool which allows for a correct, virtually unbiased analysis of the role played by valuable elements of the urban texture within a certain culture<sup>39-40</sup>. Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) seems to take these cultural differences for granted and criticises the emphasis put by Hall on this; instead Lefebvre considers that the practices of everyday life and their change over time are more important in determining the nature of the urban form<sup>41</sup>. For him space is essentially a social product and criticises the Modernist Urbanism for failing to understand this. He is interested in the layering of the urban form in time, whose variety he explains through a concurrence of different factors, from our everyday practices and perception to contemporary theories of space and the spatial imaginary. These are manifested in the process of replacement of parts of the social space as they become obsolete, leading to intercalation, combination and superimposition of places within the social space<sup>42</sup>. This is the nightmare of the urban history or geography, but for urban conservation this is in fact an essential characteristic that allows 'continuity' and adaptation without fractures of urban identity.

Georg Simmel	<i>sociology of space</i>
Patrick Geddes	<i>civic survey</i>
Jane Jacobs	<i>performance of space</i>
Kevin Lynch	<i>place legibility</i>
Edward T. Hall	<i>proxemics</i>
Henri Lefebvre	<i>social production of space</i>
Otto Bollnow	<i>anthropology of space</i>

Figure 1. Key concepts in the interpretation of the meaning of space in urban conservation

<sup>39</sup> K.A. DOXIADIS, *Ekistics. An Introduction to the Science of Human Settlements*, Hutchinson, London, 1968.

<sup>40</sup> M. ELIADE, *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1959.

<sup>41</sup> H. LEFEBVRE, *The Production of Space* [1974], translated by D. NICHOLSON-SMITH, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p. 154.

<sup>42</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 86-87 and 167.

The places weaved within the urban fabric, as places to return to<sup>43</sup>, have distinct characters and significations contributing to the idea of *genius loci*. They are focal points of the city and the rest of its texture is a continuum around these nuclei, although the neighbourhood, street and square have arguably lost their landmark character due to the distorted scale of the city. One of the contemporary problems of our existence and our existential space is that rapid technological and communication development has led to new forms of mobility, leading to an «experience of the space of flows, superseding the meaning of the space of places»<sup>44</sup>. As a result, some social historians affirm that human interactions rather than places are the essence of the city and its life, a ‘social space’<sup>45</sup>. This view went as far as imagining a utopian city, mobile – a New Babylon<sup>46</sup>, the new exemplar city – in which the man is no longer returning to places, because life would be a permanent journey<sup>47</sup>. This transgression of spatial boundaries seems to be inconceivable in spite of technological advancement, because it would be altering the very essence of human interactions (The result of such a place is a rather closed and self-sufficient community such as the one on Jules Verne’s Floating City). Human development would be impossible in such a city, with human connections becoming extremely weak<sup>48-49</sup>. This whole concept of the mobile city is built on the misunderstanding that a structured city with centre and a stable routes

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<sup>43</sup> M. ELIADE, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour: archetypes et repetition*, Gallimard, Paris, 1949.

<sup>44</sup> M. CASTELLS, *The Informational City*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 348.

<sup>45</sup> J. ALLEN, C. HAMNETT, *A Shrinking World? Global Unevenness and Inequality*, Oxford University Press - The Open University Oxford, 1995.

<sup>46</sup> Babylon is often used as the image of the exemplar city. See Metropolis, *et al.*

<sup>47</sup> C. NORBERG-SCHULZ, *Existence, space and architecture*, cit., p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> J. PIAGET, *The Psychology of Intelligence*, Routledge, London, 1950, pp. 156-164.

<sup>49</sup> While such technological advancements enhanced long-distance human relationships, they cannot replace the role of direct, unmediated human encounter for individual and societal development. The fact that technologically mediated human interaction proves insufficient and personal contact is paramount is now more and more acknowledged, to the extent to which technology is now test-

system would diminish the liberty of human movement and his possibility of action. Mobility itself is based on a structured image of the environment and liberty does not entail chaos and renouncement of human identity, but, on the contrary, entails habitation, harmony and protection. As in the Odyssey, man should have a place to depart from and permanently return to, all other places becoming a continuation of this initial existential space. Therefore, the Odyssey is still a valid narrative, and our problem as far as space is concerned remains the conservation of human identity<sup>50</sup>.

The very human existence is spatial, by that of man being inseparable from space and space habitation being essential to existence, therefore, existential space symbolises the human existence in the world<sup>51</sup>. Space is the central concept in architecture and urbanism; their history could be regarded as a succession of different spatial concepts. This makes the historic city the result of continuous superimposition of these concepts, historical layers overlapping and interacting in almost an 'organic' way. Writings in philosophy, anthropology, and their more recent extension – phenomenology have been analysed (some sooner and some later) by architecture and urban theorists, who in most instances have built upon them the denigration of modern architecture and urbanism. It is true that, even if not all has been said on the mutually contradictory essence of the traditional and the modern urban space, the subject itself remains a subject of the last century, which raises historiographical rather than theoretical interest now.

Nevertheless these theories are worth revisiting with the question of conservation in mind, as they have contributed to an understanding of the values of the historical urban texture and its cultural determinism in contrast with a certain globalization of culture to be found in contemporary conservation interventions and theoretic-

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ed to assist personal encounter rather than replace it (as it was the case of the last decades).

<sup>50</sup> C. NORBERG-SCHULZ, *Existence, space and architecture*, cit.

<sup>51</sup> M. HEIDEGGER, *Being and time*, State University of NY Press, Albany, NY, 1996.

cal discourse. Therefore, these put the basis of value judgements as *relative* social constructs or conventions, a fact that draws their relevance to be limited and culturally specific. This highlights the importance of the emic perspective focusing on the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to a given community, which is indeed the sole judge of the accuracy of this emic identification.

### *Cultural determination of urban form*

The seventeenth century map of Edinburgh shows a mediated image of the urban form, in which main buildings are oversized and have more accurate details. Also, for the fishbone pattern of the urban fabric, it is not an exact representation but rather intends to show its different densities, to give an impression of it. There is no formal differentiation between dwellings: the social hierarchy is not visible in the urban form. However, the communal places are emphasised in size and form: the church, the castle, the school, the marketplace, the gates, the walls. In terms of configuration, there is a gradual transition from the communitarian space to the private dwelling. In contrast, the Georgian New Town shows a planned alienation of this gradual approach: there is direct contact between the public street space and the very private space inside the house. This results in a loss of the small community structure corresponding to the semiprivate space of the closes and wynds<sup>52</sup>. Moreover, no exterior space for gathering was planned. The two large squares are gardens, for display rather than gathering, just like the large streets. Also, only two churches were planned initially as interior communitarian space. In this way, an imposed urban form induces a change in the culture of the community itself, to the extent to which people moving in the New Town were coming from the Old Town.

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<sup>52</sup> D. BELL, *Edinburgh Old Town: The Forgotten Nature of an Urban Form*, Tholis Publishing, Edinburgh, 2008, pp. 116-121.



Figure 2. Edinburgh Old Town. Gordon of Rothiemay, 1647 and Edinburgh New Town. 1830-1 General Post Office Directory (Fragments, National Library of Scotland)

A comparison of medieval and modern urban form of Bucharest reveals medieval plots that resulted in irregular trajectory and margins of the streets, the private plot is more important, streets are merely pathways between them; modern city, streets were regulated, enlarged, private plots loose in the favour of the public space. Churches – main public buildings in a society structured by its religion – reveal the parochial organisation of the town, small communities around the parish church.

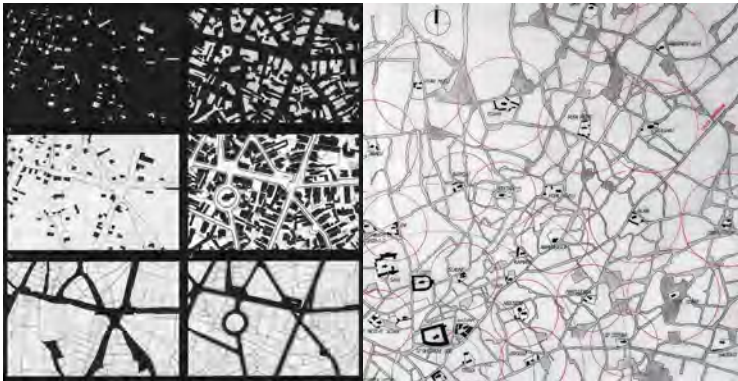


Figure 3. Bucharest. Medieval vs. modern urban texture (buildings, streets, plots) and hypothesis of the concentric development of parishes (Dana Harhoiu, Bucureşti, un oraş între Orient şi Occident/Bucarest, une ville entre Orient et Occident, Bucharest: Editura Simetria, 1997)



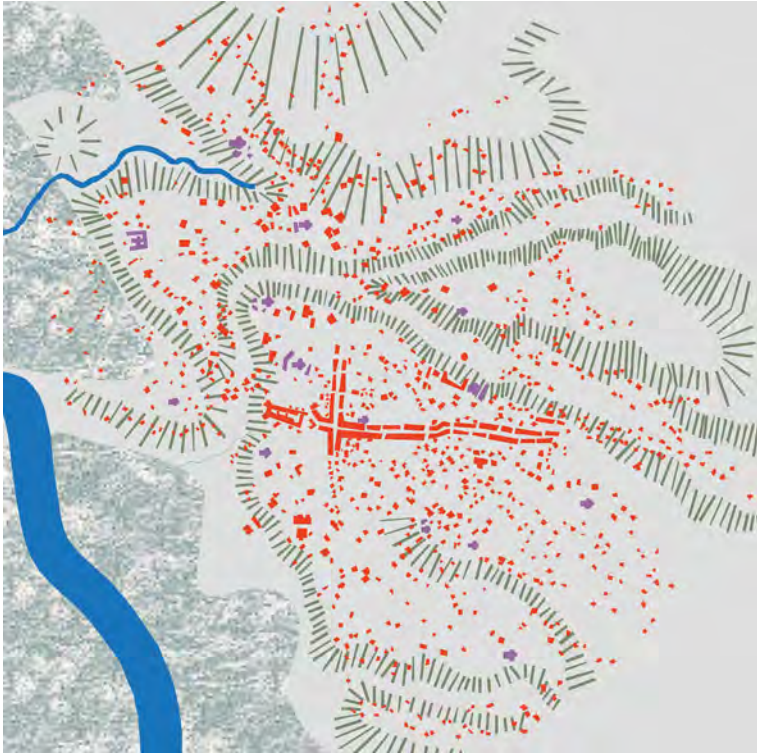


Figure 4. The built environment of medieval Craiova (Author's drawing.)

*Similar urban form with different meaning in different cultures*

In the case of medieval Craiova, social hierarchy is not shown in the position of the houses within the city structure but in the size and materials used for the houses (brick masonry as opposed to entirely wooden structures). Nobility houses side by side with those of ordinary folk on the higher plateaus but segregated from the gypsies who live in the valley by the marches in precarious structures or tents. The religious and administrative nuclei are on a hill-top, separated from the commercial centre, whilst in other cultures

towns have these around the same central square. The distribution of commercial structures is determined by a weekly market that moves gradually with the limits of the town while its structures become permanent.

In Sighisoara, the fortified Saxon citadel is on a hilltop with this dense texture, whilst the Hungarian and Romanian communities inhabit in the valley with sparse texture (houses with gardens). Patrician houses around the squares in the citadel (painted facades, sculptures). As one goes from the centre towards the town walls the size, materials and style of the houses changes: they become smaller and humbler.

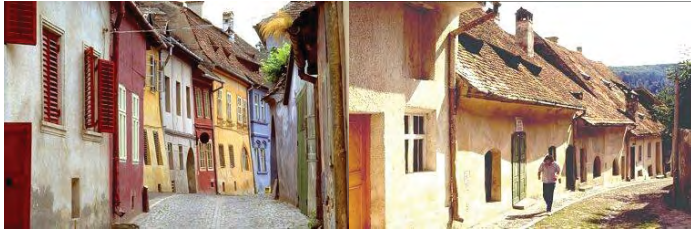


Figure 5. Sighisoara, street in the citadel and street to the outer walls of the citadel (*wikimapia.org*)



Figure 6. Sighisoara, square in the citadel and diagram of the planned growth of Saxon colonisation settlements (Author's photo and drawing)

In the case of Saxon colonisation settlements: very formal organisation of the community mirrored by the urban form: linear structure with an enlargement of the street in the centre. Plots are subdivided in elongated plots as they are inherited and split between heirs<sup>53</sup>. The aristocracy houses are grouped around the central square (not commercial structures like in other towns). Very strict community hierarchy resulting in inflexible hierarchy of urban form: when a smaller town is promoted to the rank of royal burgh, a new, larger central square is inaugurated and becomes the focal point of the community.

This is how in the emic discourse, we can separate identical urban forms through their meaning, while in the etic one they would have simply been co-massed within the same typology.

### *Conclusion*

Although the etic and emic approach are mutually exclusive, there is not necessarily a dichotomy between the *meta-* and *speci-*discourses produced by them, they merely complement each other, and only a simultaneous reading of the urban texture can possibly reveal the utmost of its values. The fact that similar features of the urban texture have different functions within the urban organism reveals etic differences between various usages of one emic element. The distinction between specificity and intrinsic values is essential and this part of the research offers an articulation of the emic/etic discourse within the urban conservation field. This understanding of the nature of urban fabric could allow a more meaningful use of analyses in urban conservation, going beyond the typological approach developed over the last century.

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<sup>53</sup> Stubben did a plan of Koln showing 102 parallel plots of 2 meters to the street by 200 meters deep (G.R. COLLINS, C.C. COLLINS, *Christiane Crasemann. Camillo Sitte and the birth of modern city planning*, Phaidon Press, London, 1965, p. 42.)