

Perceptible World Behind Design

Zeynep Çolak

For me, architecture is the journey of the process and evolution of human existence in all dimensions; it is a challenge that man in the evolution process fights for his true existence. During this great challenge, man gained the ability to think about existence and the courage to use his mind; he developed his feelings and thoughts within aesthetic values and made architecture immortal and permanent. Man was being of his mind, thought, knowledge and consciousness in the ancient Greek era. Then the Renaissance artists created three dimensional works and discovered the secrets of nature, space and architecture. After that the Bauhaus school transferred the basic form to a three-dimensional world, architecture, with a new logic of seeing, thinking and feeling. In all of these eras man produced works in the act of creating by following the new logic of cognitive, in other words 'conscious intellectual activity such as thinking, reasoning or remembering' (Meriam Webster). Moreover on the hunt to find its reason for existence man discovered the potentials of the nature and science because nature heightens the human experience by awakening senses and since the senses are linked to emotions they affect us. Another thing that is essential for the experience is the atmosphere; as architects we actually design an atmosphere, the feeling and experience of it that invites visitors to discover is the essence of architecture. As a result all of these have an impact on the experience and in my opinion this is the *raison d'être* of design; when intellectual activity, atmosphere and the process comes together they create a perceptible world behind our designs that is able to show us the journey of human existence in other words they create a cognitive space that responds with experience and nature centric designs strengthens it.

"Every time designers engage themselves in a design project, they somehow recreate the world" (Findeli, 2001). I love the power of design; whether it is an object or a space or a building, design in general have a power; their textures, functions, colors *demand, encourages, mediates, delegates* and *allows* for different experiences therefore they affect and shape our behavior, senses and emotions and I believe matching these activities with design is the way to 'reimagine architecture as a cognitive space'. If we look at this way it becomes easy to understand why we designers are recreating the world and the term 'social' because when we imagine any design in a cognitive way we focus on the experience and therefore we focus on how we affect humans. Albena Yaneva says "It is impossible to understand how a society works without appreciating how design shapes, conditions, facilitates and makes possible everyday sociality" (Yaneva). With this in mind I started to rethink my 3rd year urban housing project in a cognitive way. I believe every space has its own distinctive sound of intimacy, rejection or invitation, hospitality or hostility moreover spaces can promote our social, cognitive and emotional development and this is why the pure existences of the spaces in all figures are a way of affording a reassembly of the 'social'. That is to say they offer a social contentment in pleasure to all visitors without regarding gender, age and profession, moreover they become places where the people can collectively enjoy using the space. They *mediate* conversation through a specific way in which it *delegates* and facilitates activities like walking, sitting, resting and reading. Since these basic actions are repeating and they are enjoyed by different users, this repetition stimulates the enrichment of social life. Moreover as the visitors walk through levels the curves affect their emotions instantly with their playful impulses also the benches are inviting them with the curvilinear forms because it makes them seem more approachable compared to rectilinear ones.



Image 1.1 (by author)

In the 1.2 image we see a promenade that holds the main circulation but other than that we know the *script* of a promenade is simply to follow but with the curvilinear path, the promenade hides the destination point and creates a huge excitement and curiosity for the visitor while the plants creates an isolated experience for the visitors inside. It becomes a place for

the individual to rest with the company of their thoughts and it *encourages* them to follow the curvilinear path.



Image 1.2 (by author)



Image 1.3 (by author)

In the image 1.3 we can question the materials, for instance the glass tells visitors to stay off but, *allows* them to observe, while wooden railings politely *requests* to stay off but the wooden encounters *allows* to touch and feel the texture. On the other hand in all images a nature centric design can be seen; trees and plants changes the atmosphere by creating a tranquil zone they direct the attention away from the physical room and towards the individual and their place in the world. In other words visitors' actions and thoughts are *mediated* by the objects and spaces; they emphasize a new social dimension.

Overall all these terms are related to the experience, the main reason for that is the fact of design being related to experience. Whether it is a product and architectural space or an object, the experience of them makes the differences and affects us. I love the quote "Architecture is the art of reconciliation between ourselves and the world, and this mediation takes place through the senses" (Pallasmaa, 1996). So the atmosphere we design communicates with the senses, memory and logic and creates the cognitive world through perception and this an experience worth the journey to discover it.

Notes From the Author;

- 1 The term "script," comes from the sociology of technology, it refers to both the object's perception of the world and the program of activity it is expected to carry out.
- 2 Taking an ecological approach, I use the term "affordance" to refer to the object, to the environment and to the observer at the same time. Affordances define the variety of possible activities but they must be visible and hence perceived by the users.
- 3 The term "mediator" refers to the idea that objects are participants in an action that is overtaken by other agencies, which is a key of ANT (Latour 2005).
4. Engineers and designers "delegate" action to nonhumans by substituting design objects, settings, and equipment for human action and making them permanent occupants of the position of humans, allowing them to control human activity by dispersing competences and prescribing obligations.

References

Findeli, A. (2001). *Rethinking Design Education for the 21st Century: Theoretical, Methodological, and Ethical Discussion.*

Meriam Webster. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cognitive>)

Pallasmaa, J. (1996). *The Eyes of The Skin.*

Yaneva, A. *Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design.*

Latour, B. (2005) *Reassembling the Social – An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*

