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Architecture and Anthropology. Working in between Concepts

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Abstract. Architecture and anthropology have become more and more intertwined, making place to what I call an anthropo-architecture – an architecture centred on its social outcomes, an architecture that understands and creatively interprets sociological and anthropological inquiries to a level that exceeds a basic multidisciplinary approach. This article puts together related fundamental concepts in architecture and anthropology (like spatial vs. social relations, boundary vs. limits etc.), underlying their distinct role but also their intersection and, what is most important, (new) overlapping concepts that can’t be considered to pertain to one discipline or another, but to both regarded together – as an antropo-architecture. The new concepts (or new meanings given to fundamental concepts) as results of this research speak of: an architecture that accommodates the ever-changing social needs; of socio-spatial interactions as interactions fostered by design; of the boundary as a dynamic relation between spaces and – more than that – between their social components; of the in-between as the most socially, emotionally, experiential and transformative contemporary space through the creativity and the performances it facilitates; of antropo-architecture as an equilibrium between architectural perception and anthropological field research. This research wishes to emphasize the contemporary need for an antropo-architectural approach and it provides a conceptual frame for reading, understanding and interpreting the built space and its use. It takes a look into various theories in search of shared/related/new overlapping concepts and it investigates their role through examples and research-by-design proposals coordinated by the author. Such approaches lead to a better understanding of the urban space and of the ways in which it is being used, as well as of social realities and issues. They invite users, spectators, viewers to question, to imagine, to interact, intervene, propose and not only use space and everything in it. Antropo-architectural interventions foster the active engagement of its users, it embraces and it encourages its users to embrace diversity (of background, of opinion, of experience etc.) and ideas of multiplicity (of identities, realities etc.) through creative appropriation and interpretation of the built environment.

1. Introduction

Nowadays multidisciplinary approaches have become the norm, leading to unprecedented rates of innovation. Architecture and anthropology for example, although they have always been interrelated through working with/for people, now seem to intertwine in ways that contribute to much more than a deeper understanding of architecture and its impact upon its users.

Architecture is basically defined as the design of the built (and unbuilt) space. It has been recognised as both art and science, linking “processes of abstraction” and the experiences made possible by its material form [1]. Beyond a first connection between form and social impact however, the contemporary understanding of architecture places it at the forefront of social innovation. The qualities and values of



the built and unbuilt prove to be highly anchored in a deep and meaningful reading, interpretation and transformation of reality (or rather realities). This is best made visible through designs that tackle social, cultural, economic, historical, political issues not perceived as problems but rather opportunities (to foster community formation, intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue, knowledge achievement and exchange, sustainable life styles etc.) by architectural firms like OMA (eg. Danish Architecture Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark) or BIG (Loop City in Copenhagen Suburbs and the Dresund Region, Denmark). Competition themes and design as well as architecture diploma projects are sometimes even more innovative, allowing themselves to work beyond the border of technological development.

Anthropology, as defined by Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer in a language as familiar, natural and anthropological as it can get, studies “the business of being human” [2], meaning that anything that has to do with people is a subject unpretentiously worth studying (especially marginal subjects of their lives). Unlike architecture that always depends, in some percent, upon the subjectivity and vision of the architect, anthropology takes comfort in its duty to understand and express the perspective of the subject.

Anthropology and architecture have always been concerned with the connection between human behaviour and built space given the fact that “Whereas anthropology seeks to understand what it means to be human, architecture provides conditions for being human and responds to the human condition” [3]. In recent years a more direct and deliberate dialogue arose framing an architectural anthropology or anthropo-architecture.

Through the term anthropo-architecture we refer to an architecture centred on its social outcomes, an architecture that understands and creatively interprets sociological and anthropological inquiries to a level that exceeds a basic multidisciplinary approach. Anthropo-architecture is mainly concerned with its users, their meaningful and transformative experience in space.

Marginality has been recognized as a subject that challenges architecture and anthropology to work together, to support each other. Our approach towards an antropo-architecture happened on the boundary, while inquiring the processes, performances, activities that take place between inside and outside, in an in-between space that more and more often acquires its own spatiality and characteristics. We discovered that the architectural “practices that continuously push the boundaries of what is expected, that challenge the ordinary through practice and imagination” [3] cannot be fully understood and taken further without being sustained by an anthropological approach as well. Consequently, this paper takes into account related fundamental concepts in architecture and anthropology defining or revolving around such in-between spaces (which we call boundary-spaces). This article does not wish to exhaust a list of overlapping concepts and relationships between concepts, neither to illustrate a theory of architectural vs./and anthropological space. It questions current concepts around use vs./and design emphasizing the contemporary need for an antropo-architectural approach. It provides a conceptual frame for reading, understanding and interpreting the built space and its use. It looks into various theories in search of shared/related/new overlapping concepts and it investigates their role through examples and research-by-design proposals coordinated by the author.

2. Concepts

This article puts together related fundamental concepts in architecture and anthropology (Table 1), underlying their distinct role but also their intersection and, what is most important, (new) overlapping concepts that can't be considered to pertain to one discipline or another, but to both regarded together – as an anthropo-architecture.

Architects as well as anthropologists work with specific tools and concepts having a specific meaning and logic when applied to a certain task – that of designing a building or building complex vs. that of researching a certain social aspect.

Anthropology starts with understanding the concept of “reality” and as long as “reality is socially constructed” [4] everyday life is a permanent relevant subject to be inquired with the remark however, as Berger & Luckmann argue, that “Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world.” [4]. Through actions and performances, reality becomes linked to a social space which is “always, and simultaneously, both a *field of action* [...] and a

basis of action”, „[is] at once *actual* (given) and *potential* (locus of possibilities)” [5 auth. subl.]. Here is where architecture starts to have an impact upon social space as it creates at least an active background that frame possibilities of use.

Architecture on the other hand, in its contemporary understanding, “is made by use and by design” [1]. It stops being just a (passive) background although it cannot be fully liberated of its abstract components, of its need for analytic theories. Jonathan Hill emphasizes that “[t]he difficulty and the glory of architecture” lies both in “the creation of a theoretical realm through building, and in the creation of an experienced reality” [1]. Beyond such a role assumed by any architect (with a minor or major emphasis put on experience), Hill, in his book *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users*, gives great importance to the creativity of the user, considering that buildings are constructed anew through each use and interpretation given by user. By questioning the authority of the architect, he turns architecture towards anthropology. In the end, ethnography as an anthropological research method becomes vital for example in order “to understand the field”; “to seek the relevance and impact of ideas”, “to attain a holistic perspective of the local (social, cultural, political, financial, etc.)” [3].

In previous papers, we researched various aspects of the connection between architecture and anthropology. In the context of the present paper it’s and its in between positioning we mention:

- the analysis of an architecture under way – an architecture that accommodates the urban flow, transforming the building envelop and/or its limits into an architecture having an anthropological role [6] and
- the blurring of institutional boundaries in order to reach a broader audience, framing intermediary spaces as rich anthropological spaces [7].

This paper wishes to structure concepts inevitably brought into question when researching topics of both architectural and anthropological interest. By defining each concept in the terms of their specific domain and then combining them in a concept that covers their overlapping use we aim at facilitating a mutual understanding and an ease in operating in-between.

Table 1. Correspondence between the architecture vs. anthropology concepts discussed

ARCHITECTURE		ANTHROPOLOGY
Site-specificity		Appropriation
		Participation
		Identity/Identities
Spatial configuration	Socio-spatial relations	Social relations
Hierarchy		
Boundary		
Intermediate space		Liminal/Liminoid
Perception	Interpretation	Field research

Given the double drive of architecture towards anthropology and vice versa, the new concepts or new meanings given to fundamental concepts we identified (Table 1) speak of:

- an architecture that accommodates the (ever-changing) social needs by being local, integrated and well anchored in the social, cultural, political, economic context; starting from the distinction between “site” and “field”, here we equate architectural site-specificity and anthropological concepts of appropriation, participation and identity;
- socio-spatial interactions as social relationships fostered by design – by spatial configurations and spatial hierarchies;

- the boundary as a dynamic relation between spaces and – more than that – between their social components;
- the in-between as the most socially, emotionally, experiential and transformative contemporary space through the creativity and the performances it facilitates;
- anthropo-architecture as an equilibrium between architectural (subjective) perception and anthropological (objective) field research.

2.1. *Site vs. field*

An architect must respond to the specificity of a certain site – the very place where the building he will design will be built. One of the main concepts he works with is site-specificity which covers various aspects whose understanding and interpretation leads to a building integrated into the surrounding. These aspects refer mainly to characteristics, relations, realities, identities etc. that can be materially expressed (Table 2). Site-specificity means for example inquiring the scale of the surrounding buildings, their configuration and characteristics (accesses, relations between inside and outside, their transparency vs. opacity etc.), the materials used, their expression, all related to the functions the buildings play. Analysing a site can also assume, depending on the program of the future building, inquiring its place at a bigger scale – that of a larger community, of a sector or the city. A quality project also interprets the historical, cultural, social, political, economic context and translates such aspects into the built form. Although highly appreciated among professionals, these translations might not always be explicit (and might even be more appreciated the least explicit they are), but they assume the power of carrying on tradition, of facilitating appropriation by relating to collective memory or to the subconscious of the users for example (thus taking into consideration some anthropological aspects).

Anthropological research assumes establishing a field of research which resemblances the larger perimeter an architect questions in relation to the site he works on. In regard to the uses of the built space, influenced by its presence and characteristics, anthropology works with concepts like appropriation, participation and identities (Table 2). It researches: the mechanisms through which a building is appropriated and thus used naturally, careless; the use itself, the context and aim of the use activated by the presence of a certain built environment; the way a building contributes to the establishment or framing of identities.

Both architecture and anthropology study the identity of a place – what makes that place unique. Anthropology needs such an inquiry in order to understand the community, the phenomenon, its functioning while architecture uses its specific analysis of a place in order to make the new design part of the local context. While the latter looks at site specificity in this context, the former takes into consideration the way space is being appropriated, the way people participate in space and the local identity/identities. Anthropology seeks unicity, similarity in the sense of discovering what differentiates a community from another putting in the center people's need for recognition and self-recognition. It looks at relations between individuals or between individuals and space in terms of engagement (what kind, when, why etc.), acceptance, social integration etc. In anthropology, identity or identities are not immutable. Being “formed by social processes” [4] which are ever-changing, they assume also maintenance and change, thus an inquiry of the complex processes which lead to the preservation of some elements and to the perversion or obliteration of others.

In the end, the aim of the architect is a building properly used, in accordance to its purpose (meaning a building appropriated by its users). However, contemporary architecture situates itself beyond such basic purposes. It takes into consideration anthropological inquiry results as well as possible anthropological outcomes. Most importantly, it starts with ideas of fostering appropriation and participation and of expressing identities in order to function as designed. Starting with older concepts like underdesign as stated by Rapoport in 1990 [8] – as an architecture that does not wish to programme every possible action in the smallest detail – architecture now is often subordinated to social needs and the built environment is seen rather as “as a social and cultural product, continually (re)produced through use” [9]. Underdesigning, however, is not such an easy task as architecture has to respond to the rapid ever-changing character of social reality and the sole (re)production through use might not always be

all that it needs to adapt. On the other hand, underdesigning recognizes the potential architecture has to be continually reinvented, rediscovered through the new uses it fosters. Underdesign as opposed to overdesign allows personalisation, differences of readings and meanings attached to the built and unbuilt space, mediating the processes of appropriation and framing of identities, allowing the statement of social status, priorities and values.

Table 2. Main aspects of concepts in between architectural site-specificity and anthropological identities

ARCHITECTURE		ANTHROPOLOGY
Site-specificity		Appropriation Participation Identity/Identities
scale		
volumetric configuration		
materials	underdesign	unicity ± similarity recognition and self-recognition
city connectivity	architecture that responds to	
activation of local/urban relationships	ever-changing social needs	engagement
	use	assumption, acceptance, integration
relating to the historical, cultural, social, political, economic context [interpreting]		

2.2. *In between hierarchies and relationships*

An architect learns how to design and connect spaces that can accommodate various functions. The characteristics of each space (dimensions, proportions, compartmentalisation, entrances, materials etc.), the flows it allows to/through/from it are regarded in close connection to the programme, the adjacent spaces, the use it needs to respond to. All these materialize in drawings that can only presume the use itself.

The architectural scale depends upon the function a building accommodates, the number of people expected to cross its boundary, to use it one way or another. Each room can respond to different needs and have a certain place in a functioning scheme. Whether the architect gives shape to a main function, a secondary, related or auxiliary function, each assumes a certain relationship to one another but also to the public space. He must take into consideration the need for filters of privacy, the need for a certain path, the other spaces that serve a certain space in order for it to function properly. Each of the architectural aspects discussed here (Table 3) may have a certain impact upon the use of the space and the social relations it facilitates.

Anthropology gives much of its attention to social relationships for which spatial characteristics usually constitute the context – as a description of the field or as the context which influences behaviour. It generally follows interactions, the way they happen, the elements that frame certain pattern of interaction. It links behaviour and social interactions to various elements, uncovering interdependencies. It looks at the mechanisms through which social reality is produced and reproduced (Table 3).

Now architects must make use of anthropological researches in order to design much more than shapes and spatial relations (that can function as designed). They must be innovative and to do so must understand social realities, identities, use, must understand what drives them or inhibits them in order for a project to have a social impact – for example: reactivating dead spaces in a city, rediscovering place identities, fostering communities (their formation, interaction, expression). Thus architecture itself

is redefined as it “no longer results from creating shapes in space, but rather from fostering relationships within it” [10].

Table 3. Relationship aspects in between architecture and anthropology

ARCHITECTURE		ANTHROPOLOGY
Spatial connections Hierarchy	Socio-spatial relationships	Social relationships
scale vs. function		
main/secondary/related/auxiliary functions	an architecture that fosters relationships	interactions
spatial integration		interdependency
visual integration		socially produced reality

The connection between space and social relationships has been inquired for some time now. Lefebvre considered in 1974 that “space implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships”, space being “not a thing but rather a set of relations between things” [5].

Such relationships manifest through use. In architecture, use restarted being an issue, a problem to take into consideration in the design process, in postmodernism, getting to even promote the abolishment of all barriers between builders and users [11] and so to transform anyone into an architect and any building into architecture. Such concepts, although less blunt, have been revisited recently as we’ve seen above when speaking of Hill’s *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users* [1].

It is not easy proving a direct impact of space upon social relations or vice-versa. They certainly influence each other but in ways that might escape a clear determinism. Bill Hillier caught the complexity of the subject in saying that “the relation between space and social existence [...] lies in the relations between configurations of people and configurations of space” [12]. He regarded architecture as “a set of preconditions”, a “trigger” for social behaviour [12] that can be mapped, leading to quantifiable results through analysing patterns of movement as the most basic form of use. Such mapping cannot lead to generalisations as it depends on actual configurations and actual uses of those configurations, but it can speak of impact and grasp the connection between space and relationships through mathematical and geometrical processes.

Even though the connection between space and social relationships is complex, even though they do influence each other but in ways that cannot be easily described, contemporary architecture gives a much greater importance to the relationships it fosters beyond those implicit to the purpose of the building. It looks at what happens in-between the main functions of the building, in the intermediary spaces, at what happens with those that are not users but rather passers-by or even beholders, to the relationships that transgress the boundary of the building designed or of its immediate surrounding.

2.3. The boundary

The main difference between architectural and anthropological boundaries is in their nature – physical vs. immaterial at least in their effect (Table 4). Architecture works with delimitations, with walls that enclose a space/separate spaces, that allow only through their doors and windows the communication between inside and outside (from visual communication to crossing over). Anthropologists and sociologists did not quite believe in an actual separation, considering, like Henry Lefebvre stated, that boundaries mark “an ambiguous continuity”, not a separation [5].

Anthropology works with social boundaries, personal boundaries etc. which even if may materialize in or rely on physical boundaries, imply certain social or psychological effects – they can be read rather

as functions as Inge Boer stated [13]. Fredrik Barth who described the relationship of two neighbours over the garden fence has offered a very good example of how boundaries work in anthropology. He observed that beyond the role of separating properties, the presence of a fence enables certain interactions, „it frames and defines the nature of the opportunity” [14]. Barth recognized that most of the boundaries „are built by processes other than those that define the boundary”, thus enriching the basic meaning and understanding of the concept – that of separating things that are distinguished.

Architecture needs boundaries to create a feeling of protection, to enclose areas where certain activities may take place, to filter levels of privacy. Drawing boundaries, however, cannot be seen just as the action of separating an inside from an outside. As Bill Hillier states, as long as the distinction in made by a social being, the boundary also carries with it” the logical consequences that arise from that distinction” [12], speaking of interdictions, affordances, negotiations, crossings over etc.

The spread of public buildings that accompanied the understanding of their social role (understanding of the role played by buildings opened up towards the public) led to a reanalysis of boundaries in such a context – to their blurring or even physical disappearance. The capacity to build large glass surfaces has been the technological progress which transformed the building envelope into an “osmotic membrane” [15]. This progress laid the ground for shifting the way architectural boundaries are now rather conceived in between the public space of the street and the public space inside a public building – as weak, transparent, invisible to the point that “Architecture itself can become absent and invisible”... but “visible through users” [16]. Such a conception emphasises the fact that architecture “no longer results from creating shapes in space, but rather from fostering relationships within it” [10].

Table 4. The boundary – an interdisciplinary concept by definition

ARCHITECTURE		ANTHROPOLOGY	
Boundary			
delimitation		establish, maintain	
interior/exterior	the boundary as a process – the dynamic relationship between spaces and social components	read, negotiate	
physical boundaries: strong, weak, spatial		immaterial boundaries interdiction vs. affordance	

2.4. *The in-between*

The approaches of the in-between in architecture and in anthropology are quite different (Table 5), without excluding each other though. We shall not refer here to basic interior architectural in-between spaces like hallways or corridors, nor to exterior in-between spaces like streets or plazas that both connect and separate spaces but they do not express the meaningful correlation between architecture and anthropology looked for in this paper. The concept analysed previously – the boundary – through its contemporary understanding and materialisation in architecture, opens the path towards generating/expanding another kind of in-between space, a space of great socio-cultural potential. We refer to those spaces whose functions form an interface between interior and exterior, public and private, to spaces that blur the distinction between inside and outside. Atriums, shops, cafés, restaurants etc. placed at the ground level of different buildings and institutions can be seen as natural extensions of the public space inside a building:

- through the transparency of their boundaries (e.g. Media Library [Third-Place] in Thionville by Dominique Coulon & associés),
- through their configuration (see Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre by Henning Larsen Architects which is a large in-between space inside which the functional spaces of the building are placed);

- or through their openness towards the general public (Maunula House by K2S Architects is a cultural and learning hub in Helsinki, Finland with various shared spaces dedicated to various activities or ages; its openness towards the public is best marked through its shared entrance with the local grocery store).

In anthropology, Arnold van Gennep [17] introduced the idea of rites of passage as necessary rites in traditional societies that accompany the passage from one state to another (uninitiated vs. initiated). He identified preliminal, liminal and postliminal rites. What interests us here are the liminal rites, specific to the state between uninitiated and initiated (into something). The liminal state corresponded to a state where neither of the rules governing the two main states applied, to a space and time considered out of space and out of time. Victor Turner continued van Gennep's train of thought, inquiring with more depth the liminal state. He observed the social importance of liminal rites (as buffers, as rites that allow discharging tensions and a safe return to "normality"). *Liminoid* – as opposed to *liminal* which usually refers to mandatory religious and political rites and manifestations – has similar characteristics ("escape from the classifications of everyday life, symbolic reversals, destruction – at a deep level — of social distinctions, and the like" [18]), but it manifests in present-day society (which isn't based upon imperative rites of passage). It allows a break from everyday realities, less dramatically perceived but still transformative to some degree. Turner referred to novel writing, painting, to carnivals, spectacles etc., thus to actions considered rather leisure. The liminoid is "a playful as-if experience" [19] that doesn't coerce difference, but it embraces it or even uses it creatively.

In the context discussed above, the architectural in-between space is a space of ambiguity, hybrid, which develops its own characteristics while dispersing rules (as limitations). These spaces combine the idea of an architectural intermediary space and the liminal/liminoid potential of a space. Thus, they become spaces that stimulate creativity and transformative activities, spaces of performance that bring together the formal, non-formal and informal. They blur the distinction between architecture and experimenting space by positing first of all "the ephemeral, the hybrid and the social as conceptual priorities in the design process" [20].

Table 5. Different understandings of the in-between in architecture and anthropology

ARCHITECTURE		ANTHROPOLOGY
Intermediary space		Liminal/Liminoid
a space that connects/separates		
a space of:	space of transformation	a time and space of reality inversion
ambiguity	creativity, performance	
ambivalence		re-establishing the social order
hybridity	formal – non-formal – informal	
blurring		a time and space of leisure
dematerialization		
dispersion		

2.5. In between specific approaches

In architecture, the first reading of a site is always subjective. An architect bases his first impressions upon perception. He looks at the built space, at how buildings sit one next to the other, at the places they create through their configuration, he searches for the atmosphere of a site created by the way all its components (including people) work together – thus it's about how he perceives it.

On the other hand, anthropologists take pride in their aim to understand the people they research, without judging their values. They start their field research with questions and do not mind in the end contradicting their expectations. They are objective in their data collection and their interpretation starts when they feel that they collected all relevant information. The built space (unless it is part of the research questions explicitly) is regarded as an active or passive background. They care about what people do in space and why they do what they do or, in the context discussed in this paper, why people built in certain ways, without considering aesthetics (other than as a subjective category important for the subjects of the inquiry). This last aspect is one of the main reasons of dissension between architects and anthropologists.

Table 6. Main characteristics of specific approaches in architecture and anthropology

ARCHITECTURE		ANTHROPOLOGY
Perception		Field research
subjectivity in reading a site (looking at the built/unbuilt space)		objectivity in collecting data (looking at what and why people do)
		equilibrium?

Figure 1. Disregarding people / Regarding both built space and people / Disregarding buildings (c)
 Photo: Anda-Ioana Sfintes, Editing: Cristiana Elena Călin

Architecture can never claim objectivity even in the case of a participatory approach (asking the community what it needs, what it likes, actively engaging it in the design process). The architect must be visionary as well as anchored in present-day reality and needs when making decisions about the intervention. Hillier considers that architecture should “tend to express aspirations rather than realities” because “architecture is about how the world should be rather than how it is” [12]. Although he may try his best to design a project that the community (if speaking of a public building) will appropriate, the community is not the only actor involved whose needs and aspirations in the same time should be taken in consideration (he must also please the sponsor, the local authorities etc.). In such cases, the architect often becomes a negotiator and this requires understanding the people he addresses to – to visit or request anthropological research.

Beyond the specific approach of each discipline (Table 6 and Figure 1), finding an equilibrium (which should first of all mean mutual understanding) can be an important step in reaching meaningful and innovative social results.

3. Results and discussions

Neither architecture nor anthropology limit themselves usually to basic (non-interdisciplinary) approaches (especially nowadays) and by first separating the concepts discussed above we do not declare an abrupt separation. We rather wish to underline a basic understanding of position meant to further help understanding the connection between the two disciplines and the way they can work together. This research wishes to become a point of dialogue between architects and anthropologists, a tool that can help architects better study and understand the anthropological context of their sites and anthropologists to cast a new understanding upon the impact of the built environment, upon its uses and the activities that take place inside it. By presenting overlapping meanings, we underlined the actuality, reach and necessity of an approach that brings together architecture and anthropology. This necessity is driven by the social, cultural, educational outcomes of such a collaboration. Nowadays we witness a great attention paid to the activities taking place in public spaces or buildings, a concern for enriching experiences, for facilitating accumulation and exchanges of knowledge, for informal learning. Public space became a pretext for engagement, participation, performance, for helping people understand deeper everything around them, to give more meaning to everything in their lives.

In this train of thought we started some projects that brought together not only architecture and anthropology (which we see so closely connected that should not be, when speaking of people and buildings, regarded separately), but also art, history, geography etc. We held two workshops that aimed at starting a dialogue between disciplines, dialogue that led to virtual projects (small architectural designs, art installation) of proposals for interventions. Our strategy has been that of inquiring a topic in close connection with a site/a field, of understanding it and its users and discovering what it needs/what it would benefit from. We shall not get into too much detail about the results of the workshops as each has been explicated in published or soon to be published articles. We will only point to those aspects that are of interest in our discussion here.

The first workshop – “Places out of the limit” – was held in 2014¹ and the participants, grouped in interdisciplinary teams, were asked to design an extension of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant to be placed in the public space that would carry outside the museum boundaries its messages. The complexity of this task relied upon the fact that the museum discourse and exhibition, although ethnographic, are recognized as work of art and that every visitor is encouraged to shape his own understanding and interpretation. Thus, the proposals differed in scale, message and aim. One of the teams (authors: Ana Maria Crăciun, Ștefania Pană, Theodora Radu, Oana Dăscăloiu) interpreted the museum messages, returned to tradition and symbols, and linked them to the urban reality outside the museum while assigning a specific social role to their installation (that of erasing barriers, of bringing people together by encouraging them to play with sound). They occupied an ample and unutilized intersection centre with a spiral made of brick and wheat to mark and transform in the same time the rush of the intersection through traditional Romanian symbolic elements. In a small park, adjacent to the intersection, they placed wells of different depths whose echoes would make reference to carrying on the messages of the museum.

The second workshop, held in 2017², was named “Bucharest. Reclaiming the porticos as intermediary spaces”. It brought into discussion a series of poorly maintained and chaotically taken over porticos situated in the centre of Bucharest. The workshop started with a short anthropological research (due to the short time we had it was rather a familiarisation of the participants with research methods and anthropological tasks). The aim was that of making the participants understand the importance of multidisciplinary research before proposing an intervention into a public space. The teams had different approaches – possible vs. impossible to implement (feasible vs. virtual), inexpensive vs. expensive, general vs. local (applicable to the entire length of the porticos vs. applicable only to one area). One of

¹ At “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, in collaboration with The Romanian Peasant Museum, as part of the author’s research for her PhD. thesis

² As an activity held by antropoarh – Studio of Research in Architectural Anthropology, found by the author as part of The Center for Architectural and Urban Studies, UAUIIM

the teams that reclaimed for the public just one of the porticos (authors: Raluca Datcu, Andreea Mihalache, Andreea Mucibabici, Andreea Stan) designed an installation that would engage the public involuntary into playing at a “harp”, the strings being the columns of the portico. They used light, colour, sound in order to get the passers-by out of a meaningless and uneventful pass through space, to make them see and perceive the space they were crossing, to make them feel they made a difference and had an impact upon the space itself.

These workshops have been a first step into inquiring the way anthropology and architecture can work together in order to transform places of the city by proposing interventions deeply rooted in the realities of today, while also understanding and embracing the transformative aim architecture assumes. In the future, we shall make the time to make in-depth field research, but more importantly to build some of the projects and to research their anthropological impact, the way they respond to the role they have been designed for, or other unexpected outcomes they may have.

4. Conclusions

The need to better respond to the challenges of today has led to considering multidisciplinary approaches as imperative. Architecture – that shapes all the places and spaces around us, and anthropology – that tries to explain all aspects of human life, are clearly interconnected: we cannot practically speak of places without their users or about users without the context of their behaviour. We can, however, put the accent on just one of the two and give specific readings to our inquiries but that would result in losses of meaning and depreciation of the actual potential and value of a context.

Architectural anthropology – as an in-between discipline – starts to take shape, following the logical consequences of identifying the strengths and opportunities of such a multidisciplinary approach. It proves useful in approaching subjects like extreme poverty as well as in-between spaces (harder to confine into the theories of a single discipline because of their positioning) or marginal practices for which architectural anthropology “can provide theories and tools that can support them in their search for creative, innovative and cutting-edge practice” [3].

In this paper we inquired some of the concepts applicable in the context of intermediary spaces (urban space, streets, patios etc.), underlining the need for and potential of multidisciplinary approaches. Although is not so imperative for anthropologists to understand architects and their designs, we can highlight, based also on all the overlapping concepts discussed above, that such approaches lead to a better understanding for example of the urban space and of the ways in which it is being used, as well as of social realities and issues. Designs that take into consideration multidisciplinary approaches invite users, spectators, viewers to question, to imagine, to interact, intervene, propose and not only use space and everything in it. Anthro-architectural interventions foster the active engagement of its users, it embraces, and it encourages its users to embrace diversity (of background, of opinion, of experience etc.) and ideas of multiplicity (of identities, realities etc.) through creative appropriation and interpretation of the built environment.

Architectural anthropology starts with understanding that “architecture is far more than the work of architects” [1].

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