

# Urban and Spatial Opposition by the Subject

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**Abstract.** In the production of spaces, an important aspect, that is ‘the subject’ was neglected with the influence of the industrial revolution, modernisation, capitalism and neo-liberalism. While the rationalist reason was standardising and extending production, the relationship between space and its user was broken-off. It initiated a tremendous change when the subject as the user of the spaces, singled out his own existence and needs from the whole and comprehended his self-distinctiveness. Such a split up indicating the act of critical thinking and liberation of the subject also created a demand for diversity. The demands of the subject being the user of the space was not met at the architectural and urban levels for several reasons. The subject feeling the discomfort of such a situation brings into view his criticisms first in his own individual space and then in public space for the purposes of expressing his right to live and his *locus standi*. Such acts being classified as adversary are being realised in order to provide the adaptability of the subject and the space to changing living conditions using different means. Such adversary touches being provided partly by the urbanites and partly by the professionals draw attention to the issue through by-pass interventions to the architecturally choked urban areas. By taking a stance against the existing situation, the intention is to treat space in a different way than what has been produced by the system, to re-produce it and to render it more democratic. All such alternative spatial situations show us that other production methods and lines of thought, other than what has been defined by the dominant market conditions are also possible. It has been asserted through these adversary instigations that there is a requirement for micro designs towards the daily and changing needs of the subject as a user during the act of design by architects and planners. For this reason, the part played by the designer should be wriggled out of ‘defining’ and ‘controlling’ effects and should turn towards using the transformational power of the society for the benefit of the same, lead the user and provide alternatives.

## 1. Introduction

Space has always been a field of conflicts and reconciliations as a whole with its physical, social, economic and political meanings. Generally accepted approaches regarding space and architecture, the issues that could not be sorted with said approaches, production of spaces performed in accordance with neo-liberal policies and the requirements of the government caused reactive approaches and a struggle carried out using space as its subject. Besides the urban inhabitants getting the task of producing spaces into their own hands through various interventions, the number of artists, designers, architects and city planners trying to produce alternatives with a critical view of the existing order is also ever increasing. Urban scale and spatial interventions have constructive effects on space with certain characteristics such as transforming the space and the ability to produce alternative spaces. It is



crucial that these movements should be analysed in order to reveal their potential in terms of the development of the city and the space.

In this study, primarily the concepts of criticism - subject - freedom have been scrutinised because they were seen as the source of power of intervention. Following that, examples have been provided from around the world where urban or private spaces have been changed through adversary interventions with their reasons and methods. These interventions by the professionals and by the users of the spaces, point towards the neglected aspects during the design and construction stages and the aspects that are not found to be appropriate by the users of such spaces of the built up surrounding.

## **2. Criticism - Opposition**

We can define an intellectual not only with regard to the quality of his occupation but as a person who approaches with criticism to the dominant situation or ideology that he opposes or even the social class that he belongs to. An actual intellectual is always obliged to handle question and ideas with suspicion and to share his conclusions with others. This attitude that realises the freedom of the individual also renders him a critic of the society at the same time. Artists, scientists and philosophers should be assumed as examples of such individuals [1]. This is a kind of opposition and opposition is defined as being against a certain attitude, a certain point of view or a certain behaviour, or being a contrarian [2]. A person who is rebelling is a person saying no. This individual is confirming the existence of a boundary with his negative reply. With the help of such a boundary, he also confirms the things that he assumes to have existed beyond that boundary and what he would like to protect. In a way, he thereby retains his right not to be crushed more than he could take against the order that crushes him. The act of rebellion rests on denying an injustice that has been found to be unbearable. Rebellion will not take place unless there is a feeling that somewhere, somehow we are also right [3].

### *2.1. An Appeal to the Subject*

The best definition of modernity is not technical advancements, or the ever-increasing individuality of the consumers but a demand for freedom and the individual's self-defence against everything that transforms the human being into a tool, an object or a stranger through such a demand. According to Touraine, an individual could transform himself into a subject only by protesting against social domination implemented in the name of freedom with the reason of producing a free self and by liberating himself from his own self. In other words, a subject could exist by protesting against the logic of order [4]. Hence, an appeal to the subject is an adverse, protesting behaviour [5].

According to Weber, rationalisation dominating all the features of bureaucratic life is a threat against individual freedom [6]. For this reason, Weber made a call to the idea of subject in order to get rid of being shut down in what he calls 'the iron cage' of modern society [4]. Althusser thinks it is possible for the subject to get rid of ideology by pondering over himself using critical theory. Liberation and consciousness are thus going to be possible [7].

Ensuring liberation is possible through emergence of art. Art provides a space to preserve an individual's utopia and hope. So that it could provide a certain amount of freedom for the individual although it is limited within the general. Art will preserve its place by questioning the society in which it grows and not by reflecting it. That is to say art has an adversary position vis-à-vis the situation it is placed in. With this feature, art is the strongest field where the individual is against the system. The only condition that art is given such a position is when it is autonomous [7].

### *2.2. The Autonomy and Re-Autonomy of the Subject*

According to Weber, what distinguishes modern societies from the previous social organisations is the emergence of rationality. Social life rationalised in the corporate and subjective levels with the emergence of capitalism and democracy [8]. Habermas pointed out that in order to survive, the

individual has to abide by the conditions of survival of the society [9]. The only objective left for the intellect from which the ability to define his life's targets leaving aside his subjectivity was taken from him and which is forced to simplify everything, is to continue functioning. While such functions belonged to an autonomous subject at one time, they are not up to him within the capitalist system [7]. As a result of all the controlling and limitations, there is no place left to run for the individual from the society [9].

The universal claims of modernity multiplied their success by joining with liberal capitalism and imperialism. In the end, the foundations of a global resistance movement against 'the hegemony of higher modernist culture' was laid. According to Harvey, what needs to be underlined in respect of the '68 movement which is in a way an early dispatcher of post-modernism is that this movement emphasised 'the areas of self-realisation that has been individualised through a critic of daily life'. Harvey defines 1960s as standing up to the repressive characteristics of all kinds of technical and bureaucratic rationalities that have been manufactured by the corporate governments and states within behavioural patterns of counter cultures and anti-authoritarianism [10]. The '68 movement that has been mentioned is a movement of creating freedom in the most natural sense of the word in consideration for a life without rules and patterns and an environment for relationships; and defends boundless diversity [11].

Harvey claimed that since the beginning of 1990s during the process of neo-liberalism, the attacks of international capitalism on daily life had been ever increasing and this repressive attitude led us into an era where the ideals of human rights made a collective breakthrough [12].

### *2.3. Diversity against Standardisation*

According to the philosophers of enlightenment, it is possible to find out the universal rules of social life and to render all individuals equal through intellect. In the past however, this excessive emphasis on the conciliatory power of intellect caused the creation of a totalitarian universality discourse by neglecting the differences [13]. Universalisation generated standardisation and the individuals reacted against standardisation [14]. The differences are multiplying with the acceleration provided by individualism and freedom movements. According to Baudrillard, political achievement is not creating equality and balance where contrasts exist but creating differences where contrast is present. The solution to social contrast is differentiation and not equalisation [15].

### **3. The Production and Re-Production of Space**

The industrial revolution irreversibly transformed the relationship between industry, society and architecture. The industrial revolution shifted the weight of the working class from the peasants to labourers, and transferred the basic settlement area from the country to the city and transported the spaces of production from agricultural fields to factories [16]. The means of production and consumption have been transformed. Now the cities being the new lands of production started to be built with great construction investments. The depreciation of the additional capital coming from the production of commodities have been tried to be prevented through such investments. The excessive accumulation and surplus labour that originated transferred to the built-up environment. Thus, both the surplus production was disinvested and new needs were created.

Lefebvre pointed out that space changes alongside the mode of production, namely alongside the society. The new mode of production claims the previously existing and previously moulded space and arranges it according to its objectives [17]. Lefebvre attributes the survival of capitalism to the fact that it was able to radically re-construct the social modes of production required by the new modes of production [16]. According to critics like Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells and David Harvey, the cities are being intensely commodified. All of the socio-spatial forms that are making the substance of the cities are being re-arranged in order to increase the profitability of the capital [18]. As

it was stated by Lefebvre, the dominant classes use space as an instrument to be subordinated to the ruling government and thus to be controlled and to rule the whole of the society in a technocratic manner by preserving the capitalist relations of production [17].

In the modern capitalist societies where life is reduced to consumption, the individual loses his autonomy and his self-existence and becomes something that is being dragged behind the material production process. The new way of life subjects the individual to an extensive form of control [7].

### *3.1. The Movement of the Subject - The Right to the City*

It is known that urbanisation played an important part during the process of the absorption of surplus capital. Such absorption is being realised at an ever-growing geographical scale and at the cost of creative destruction processes depriving the urban masses from all kinds of rights to the cities and becoming widespread gradually. This situation, just like it was in 1871 in Paris when the dispossessed masses rioted in order to get back the city that they had lost, causes revolts from time to time. The urban movements of 1968 from Paris to Bangkok, from Mexico to Chicago that have aimed to define an urban life in a way that is different from what was imposed by the capitalist construction firms and the state [12].

At a stage where Lefebvre's views have been reignited, the right to the city came back to the fore and various social movements have surfaced today claiming such right worldwide. According to Harvey, the right to the city is the right to reinvent the city after our own hearts. Shaping and reshaping ourselves and our cities have been the most valuable one amongst human rights, yet the most neglected one at the same time [12].

According to Ward people value what belongs to them, what they can change and alter in terms of their changing needs and what they can improve for themselves. People should be able to attack their surroundings in order to make it theirs. They should have direct responsibilities for it. Ward mentioned that under revolutionary and urgent situations, "spontaneous order theory" emerges. According to this theory, under circumstances where a common need is defined, a group of people is going to establish an order out of the existing situation through trial and error, improvisation and experience. And such order is going to be much longer lasting and much more connected to human needs than any other order that is imposed from outside by an authority [9].

For example, today, in one third of the world people build their own houses sometimes because of lack of government and sometimes despite government. The large scale internal migration of the last two decades in various third world countries have caused peripheral occupying settlements inhabited by "invisible" people who do not officially exist in the cities [19].

Urban individuals who are aware of their differences and needs, reveal more strongly their criticisms first in their individual spaces and then in public spaces. Meanwhile, at the artists, architects and city planners' front, reactions against the existing situation continue to arise.

This study focuses on adversary approaches that have been expressed by professionals or non-professionals in various parts of the world. Attention is drawn to architectural and urban scale congested situations through interventions, suggestions and artistic expressions that are reflected on the examples used in the study. By examining the grounds and methods of interventions, the neglected aspects during the design stage are picked out and discussions that will contribute the improvement of the same shall be presented.

#### 4. A Brief Look at the Forms of Expression of Adverse Approaches in the Architectural Environment

##### 4.1. Non-Architectural Expressions: Opposition through Arts

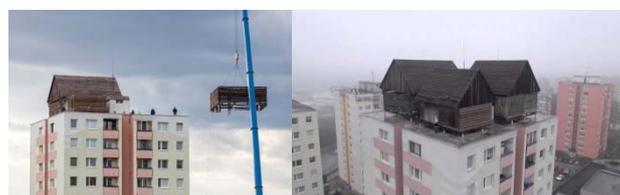
Artist and architect, Gordon Matta-Clark (1943 - 1978), is one of the founders of “The Anarchitecture” group born as a reaction to architecture performed for the sake of political and economic competence. He turned some of the tumbledown buildings he had come across into some sort of damaged sculptures by cutting, slitting, drilling and making dents. Matta Clark saw Le Corbusier’s ideas as real threats [20] and Matta Clark’s work has the characteristic of a critic to the generally well accepted and de facto principles of architecture [21]. With a feeling of space, he disclaimed both the house to be turned into a machine for being lived in by the capitalist system, to be turned into a consumption item; and that the house to be built being determinative and standardising [22].

He had performed his work that he named Splitting (Figure 1) in 1974, in a working class district in Englewood, New Jersey. He divided a ruined two storey house that he came across down the middle using a portable electric saw. He ripped the walls, the floors, the stairs and the windows in half starting from the roof down to the basement [20]. What has been done here is not constructing the house out of pieces as in the modernist approach; but to the contrary, to damage the house by way of breaking it up [22]. With this act of cutting, he challenged three basic principles laid down by Vitruvius [21].



**Figure 1.** Splitting, 1974 [23]

Slovak artists Tomáš Džadoň; criticises “Paneláks” (pre-fabricated high rise concrete blocks reminiscent of the communist era structures) which he characterises as soulless and abnegates the high-rise concrete blocks in substitute of family houses. He has the desire to make people ask questions about the place that they were living in and to remind them the traditional architecture that was being lost. For this purpose, he placed wooden cottages that he called “folk architecture monument” on the terrace of one of the concrete blocks of a housing estate that have become a symbol since they were visible on all corners of the city in the Liptovská Teplicka and Párnica region [24] (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Folk Architecture Monument, 2007

##### 4.2. Architectural Expressions: Opposition Aimed at Space

4.2.1. *Theoretical / Utopian Works* French architect Stéphane Malka criticised class discrimination, marginalisation and its reflection on the order of space. For the purposes of making the ruled out individuals (the outcasts, immigrants and utopians) in the city more visible; he produced an idea in which he would build parasite units joined to La Grand Arche which is the symbolic structure of La

Défense district of Paris. Thus the valuable public spaces in the city centres are being occupied and made into an alternative living space for the outcaste [25] (Figure 3).



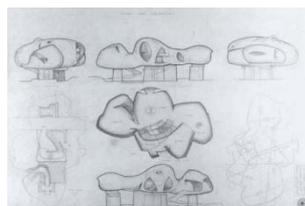
**Figure 3.** Self Defence (Pocket of Active Resistance), 2009

Architect Lebbeus Woods was critical of architecture being limited by technical, economic, legal and cultural factors objects to the physical and social orders and control mechanisms designed by the political authority and the dominant ideology. He has the desire to put up a fight against these authoritarian control mechanisms, to change the city models that have been controlled by hierarchy, politics and economy and to develop an architectural understanding that is devoid of such traditional prerequisites. Thus he came up with the concept of “free-space” [21] (Figure 4). He described free-spaces centring upon individuals for an ever changing society with non-rigid characteristics, where the functions of living spaces are defined by the users rather than the architects. He defined the role of the architect as a revolutionary, provocative and active participant [26].



**Figure 4.** Berlin Free Zone and Zagreb Free Zone [27]

Architect and theoretician Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965) was critical of the limitations brought by everything that had “an end” such as a room, a floor, a wall or a picture frame [28] and the standardisation brought by functionality. He came up with the concept of “endless space” that he produced for the purposes of satisfying the soul of the person inhabiting the house, and thereby giving back the freedom and willpower which are his fundamental rights [29]. In the endless house, each space-nucleus could be separated from the whole of the building and could be reconnected if and when desired (Figure 5). Thus the form of this space is determined by the innate course of life rather than structural regulations or temporary decoration fashions. This building is neither dependent on the mechanics of actions nor on the technique of production. This space makes use of these when they serve its purpose, however, does not give into the dictatorship of the industry [30].



**Figure 5.** Endless House, project designed for MoMA, 1959 [31]

*4.2.2. Implemented Works that Touch upon Space* Santiago Cirugeda who is known as the guerrilla architect of Spain criticises the high cost production of space and advocates that architecture should be

a cheap and functional pretext to bring people together [32]. For the purpose of producing provocative, low cost, functional and mobile spaces for the benefit of the majority, he illegally occupies the abandoned buildings in Spanish cities. He is re-building these structures in cooperation with volunteers using waste materials or the ones obtained from abandoned buildings [33] (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** La Carpa- The artistic space built by occupying an abandoned area in Sevilla, 2012

Artist Michael Rakowitz who criticised the inability of using the public spaces occupied by cars for breathing and conducting activities realised his P(LOT) project. With the project, on the hired car parking space, a car-like looking tent was pitched and thereby the inhabitants of the city was provided with a space where they can feel alone in the city [34] (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** The pitching of P(LOT) project and its interior space, 2004

Architect Stéphane Malka criticising housing not to be within reach of everybody intended to build low budget housing without the costs of expensive building plots by using the gaps in the architecture of the city and preventing the problems of increasing urban growth and expansion [35]. In his “3BOX” project which he designed as a housing interposition in the city of Paris (Figure 8); he positioned modular, parasite flats that could be expanded according to the needs of the users on the rooftops of existing buildings. According to Malka, since these could be produced easily, in large numbers and cheaply, this could be the solution to the housing problem and thus housing is going to be within reach for everybody [36].



**Figure 8.** 3BOX, 2016

## 5. Results and Discussions

Neo-liberal policies and governments enforce standardisation by ignoring the differences while regulating their rules in their own ways. However, the individual is still capable of assessing the limits and situations that have been imposed on him by the system through critical intellect. The claims for a natural life and an environment of relations without rules or templates and for freedom and diversity generated the need differences. The subject’s expression of his individuality by becoming dissimilar

from the society is a discussion on accepted and unaccepted limits and accordingly an attempt towards freedom. The need to express his freedom which is a manifestation of the individual's existence and conscious and the need to organise his own personal space for his own comfort is being qualified as an adverse attitude.

The reflections of neo-liberal view points on the production of space have deprived ordinary people from their rights to the cities and thus intervened in their lives. The problems that have not been solved through the accepted approaches on space and architecture have pushed the individuals who are aware of their non-met needs towards thinking and questioning. Everybody who has a connection with space was forced to produce for his own order, as a result of this situation, the concept of right to the city came up.

The individuals whose claims have not been met due to various reasons on the architectural and urban level, have made their criticisms apparent first on their own personal spaces and then on the public space. These adverse touches that have influenced individualisation and individual creativity have been realised partly by urban individuals and partly by professionals such as architects, planners and artists. This attitude is a manifestation of a desire of the individuals to be the producer of their social spaces rather than being consumers of them. It is possible to call these individuals as non-professional designers due to the transformations they create on space.

The common cause of almost of the works that are qualified as adverse undertakings is to give the individual and his needs the centre space. They try to assess and produce space in difference with what the system produces and also try to render it more democratic by standing against what is existing. Yet another common cause they share is that they avail the user to have a say in the creation of the space that he only will live in, and they accept the primary requirement of creating a dynamic space devoid of limitations. They put forward flexible, free, and open ended spatial suggestions in various forms to serve said purposes.

In conclusion to all the above aspects, it appears that there is a disputed territory between the mode of production created by the designer and the economic environment and the user. It became inevitable that the decision makers who have a say in the production of space and in shaping of the cities such as architects and planners to question their own parts within the frame work of various urban policies and to think on the responsibilities of architecture.

Under today's circumstances, it is becoming more and more evident with the adverse interventions that have been undertaken that the requirement for the architect to pull away from his "definitive" and "controlling" effects. When the architect assumes his role as the one who uses his social transformation power for the benefit of the society, who leads the user, who is a spatial consultant or a facilitator presenting suggestions and alternatives will give a say to the non-professional designer that is the final user of the space. It will then be possible to produce respectful, content and democratic spaces by these means.

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