ARCHITECTURAL HOMOGENIZATION

An Inquiry into the Ontological Effects of Standardizing Aesthetics and Form

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the phenomenon of architectural homogenization in urban environments over the globe and its ontological effects on urban citizens. Inspired by personal experiences of urban déjà vu, the research delves into the convergence of architectural aesthetics across various cities worldwide. It examines the historical trajectories and political dynamics that have led to the standardization of urban spaces, drawing parallels from colonial legacies to modern globalization. The study employs a conceptual framework grounded in social science and philosophy, particularly phenomenology, to investigate the subjective experiences of urban dwellers in these homogenized environments. The research questions focus on defining architectural homogenization, understanding the 'sense of place,' and exploring how homogenized architecture impacts this sense of place, potentially leading to existential confusion and disassociation. The thesis is structured into five chapters. The first chapter provides a historiographical and literature review, tracing the development of urban planning and the emergence of standardized architectural practices. The second chapter conceptualizes architectural homogenization through globalization theories, highlighting the roles of industrial technology, information communication technologies (icts), and capitalist dynamics in shaping global urban aesthetics. The third chapter delves into the ontological significance of urban spaces, discussing the concept of 'sense of place' through phenomenological perspectives. The fourth chapter synthesizes these findings, arguing the negative consequences of architectural homogenization on urban citizens' sense of place. Finally, the fifth chapter applies these theoretical insights to contemporary urban developments, illustrating the problematic nature of standardized urban aesthetics. This thesis aims to generate a critical conversation about the design of cities, advocating for a more heterogeneous and thoughtful approach to urban planning that considers the ontological well-being of urban citizens.

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INTRODUCTION

"He walked through the streets, and everything was strange and familiar at the same time, like a dream that he couldn't quite shake." (Gibson:1984:5)

In this excerpt from William Gibson's sci-fi novel "Neuromancer", we meet Case, an American computer hacker fleeing prosecution by travelling to the foreign and technologically advanced Japan. Wandering the streets of this unfamiliar urban landscape, he is engulfed with a feeling of uneasy déjà vu, failing to shake the sense that he had been there before. A place that is completely foreign imbues him with familiarity. The perpetual experience of undistinguishable urban sprawl is a common characteristic found in Gibson's fictional metropolises. Writing in the period of the 1980's, a time marked by swift technological advancement, Gibson's work takes place almost exclusively in giant, sprawling urban environments defined by intelligible planning, flashing neon signs and ambiguous existences. While many of these cities' characteristics still only belong to the world of fiction, they arguably describe key features of many urban agglomerations of the contemporary world. The skylines of geographically dispersed cities such as Chile's Santiago, Japan's Osaka, Nigeria's Lagos or Germany's Düsseldorf are all dominated by vertical structures made of glass and steel. Megacities, like Mexico City or Bangkok, have exploding population statistics, resulting in labyrinths and mazes of neighborhoods that are hardly distinguishable from each other. It therefore seems that the urban environment, regardless of geographic context, is increasingly homogenizing with shared processes. This dynamic is often discussed in the larger discourse surrounding the effects of globalization. While many phenomena are ascribed to this process that mark our time, the idea that the increased interconnectedness and acceleration of world-systems causes a convergence of cultures and practices is a commonly found point for analysis in many theories of globalization (Robinson:2008:140). We can observe this in the design and expression of urban architecture worldwide.

I have been so fortunate to have travelled and lived in many cities around the globe. However, while witnessing such a diversity of cultures from a young age has been a privilege, a feeling of uneasy familiarity has been following me. As I traversed these urban environments, I began to notice a similar aesthetic and form. It was like there was a certain logic that re-occurred in these urban developments. I couldn't help but feel as though I had been there before, or that these environments didn't belong where I encountered them. It was a feeling that only grew as I travelled more and more. Regardless of the stratification of these urban environments, I encountered the same structures, styles, and expressions. These experiences left me with feelings of confusion and dissociation as my ability to grasp these places dwindled. This led me to question whether there was a way to comprehend the sensation that enveloped me in these uniform settings. Homing in on the feeling, I felt that it was of an ontological nature. It was a disturbance of my inherent skills to perceive and relate to urban environments. This worried me deeply. The world is increasingly urbanizing, with 57 % of its population already living in cities (Destatis:2024). If contemporary urban environments produce such ontological disturbances, then it seems pertinent to address them. These anecdotal encounters with urban environments around the globe, along with the increasing importance of cities, have compelled me to produce this work. I seek to investigate a connection between the trend of architectural homogenization and the ontological experience of urban citizens that could aid in explaining my own experiences and generate a conversation about the way we design cities.

This study is therefore of a conceptual nature. It aims to establish a hypothesis about the relationship between architectural homogenization and the lived experience of the urban citizen based on analysis and synthesis of pre-established concepts and theories. I then test this hypothesis using established empirical research and real-world examples. I do not claim to encompass all types of urban existences, and I understand that many factors contribute to one's identity and practice as a citizen of a city. However, the prevalence of cities as a form of social organization, an organization defined by an increased concentration of both structures and people, lends itself to a generalizable conceptualization of the conditions in such environments. Furthermore, to study these conditions from an "ontological" perspective is an abstract endeavor. A conceptual study is therefore fit to discuss such underlying mechanisms of urban existence. With that being said, conceptual research tends to lack commonly accepted structures for research design (Jaakkola:2020:18). This can result in research outcomes that are

without a clear direction or that may be confusing to the reader. The aim of this research is to propose a causal link between architectural homogenization and the lived experience of urban citizens through the study of established concepts and theories. With this ambition in mind and to avoid the aforementioned pitfalls of conceptual studies, I rely on professor of service research, Elina Jaakkola's "model approach" to conceptual research design (Jaakkola:2020:24). The model approach describes a study which seeks to predict or argue for a causal relation between constructs with the goal of developing a new theoretical preposition or explaining the causal sequence of differentiated phenomena (Jaakkola:2020:22). According to Jaakkola, a conceptual paper following the model approach will achieve its contribution by providing a "roadmap" to understand the particular phenomenon through investigation of literature that produce definitions, causalities and effects related to the phenomenon (Jaakkola:2020:24). Therefore, I have adapted the following structure: I format a summary of arguments using a historiography, a literature review, and a conceptual framework. These arguments follow logical propositions derived from the analysis of concepts and theories, which I then test on real-world examples. The theories and concepts that I engage with in this work primarily derive from the disciplines of social science and philosophy. Social science, as a discipline, effectively investigates the causes and effects of homogenization due to its wide range of methods and theories, its ability to tackle and describe complex processes involving economies, cultures, politics, and environmental concerns, and its tendency to substantiate its work with empirical examples or data. Because I am seeking to describe a relationship between architectural aesthetics and human individuals, social scientific work is a beneficial place to seek causal explanations, as social science revolves around the relationship between human subjects and their surrounding constructs. From philosophy, I investigate conceptualizations of how human subjects are affected by their surrounding space through the school of phenomenology. I choose phenomenology due to its strong emphasis on subjective experience. Phenomenology seeks to provide methods to investigate and conceptualize how the lived experience affects the individual. The school builds on the assumption that the experience of human individuals is embodied as knowledge, which makes it a relevant way of engaging with the effects of architectural aesthetic and form on the urban citizen. Compared to the social scientific findings, phenomenology can to a greater degree provide a frame in which to understand the holistic, ontological consequences of architectural homogenization. I was tempted to also include architectural theory in the conceptual framework of the study, as its main purpose is to provide a

theoretical framework for the engagement of constructing and interacting with built spaces, making its contributions beneficial to the study of the relation between built environment and individuals. However, I refrained from substantiating my conceptual framework in this discipline, as architectural theory is not evaluated to the same criteria as social science or philosophy. Instead, architectural theory is introduced to provide supportive arguments in Chapter 4.
Following this approach and the ambitions of the study, I have identified two variables that inform the structure of this work. The first is architectural homogenization itself. At a glance, it could simply refer to the observable trend of standardization and uniformity in built urban environments across the globe. However, questions arise when one begins to investigate the particularities of this development. What has led to homogenization, and why is it in this particular form and style? The history, literature and conceptualizations surrounding architectural homogenization are therefore the main vocal points of the first two chapters.

Chapter 1 is a synthesis of a historiography and a literature review. It seeks to identify the development of urban planning as well as the political and economic trajectories that have led to the contemporary state of standardization. It also addresses key contributions and criticisms to the field, showing how they have evolved alongside its history.

Chapter 2 is the first of two chapters detailing the conceptual framework. It builds on the first chapter's findings to address architectural homogenization from a theoretical perspective. I introduce social theorists investigating homogenization dynamics under globalization to analyze the underlying mechanisms driving urban architecture to homogenize.

The second variable is the ontological effect on urban citizens. This is a rather broad subject to conceptualize. Although I had decided to refrain from using architectural theory, I allowed myself to utilize a key conceptualization to assist in framing the ontology of urban citizens; "a sense of place". A somewhat elusive concept, it alludes initially to describing the feeling, emotion or reaction of a subject within an environment and is commonly used in the field of architecture to describe a subject's associations with a place. It was first used in an academic context by the architectural theorist Yi-Fu Tuan (1930-2022), who attributed the "sense of place" to be a key com-

ponent for human existence, since it is the mode of perception that provides a visual embodiment for interpretation and memory (Tuan:1975:151). What exactly is meant by this is perhaps best explained through Tuan's conceptualization of the difference between "space" and "place". Space, in Tuan's words, is an abstract, geometric, and objective concept, describing a physical environment (Tuan:1975:152). Meanwhile, place is a subjective, experiential concept, attributed with meaning and experience (Tuan:1975:153). A "space" becomes a place in a moment of interaction with a subject's sensory perception and emotional attachment (Tuan:1975:152). A sense of place is therefore described as an experience formatted by sensory stimulus and the eventual emotional reaction to that stimuli, becoming "centers of meaning" (Tuan:1975:156). Tuan utilizes this conceptualization of sense of place to attribute great importance to the aesthetic expression of places, arguing that they through visual stimuli impact our understanding of the world around us (Tuan:1975:157). While Tuan's "sense of place" is a substantiated conceptualization, he then goes on to utilize it to explain a variety of broader, cultural connotations to architecture, which I don't consider quite as substantiated, as other variables than sensory perception highly affects these phenomena. However, the concept opens up for a discussion of the ontological importance of architectural aesthetic and form, a discussion that Tuan's work doesn't quite encompass. To investigate this further, the philosophical school of phenomenology is highly suitable.

Uncovering the ontological conditions of urban citizens through "a sense of place" is therefore the purpose of Chapter 3. By analyzing key contributions from the philosophical school of phenomenology, the chapter aims to identify components of the urban citizen's subjective experience, becoming the other half of the conceptual framework. In particular, there is a focus on three constituents; our sense of time, scale, and tactility, which inform the structure and contents of the last chapters.

Chapter 4 is a theoretical discussion based on the findings from the literature review and historiography of Chapter 1 and the conceptual framework provided in Chapters 2 and 3. Through the frame of the constituents of "sense of place" defined in Chapter 3, the effects of architectural homogenization are discussed, providing arguments as to why this trend within global urban architecture could have negative consequences for urban citizens.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter of this work. It applies the arguments from Chapter 4 to three different contemporary urban developments. While the context and stratification of these developments are varied, they are shown to exhibit similar problematic decisions in their aesthetic and form, which is attributed to their lack of regard for "the sense of place".
Informing the direction and structure of this study are four research questions:

- What is "architectural homogenization"?
- How can we describe "sense of place" and its relevance for urban existences?
- How does architectural homogenization affect the sense of place within the urban citizen?
- What consequences does the relationship between architectural homogeniza tion and sense of place have?

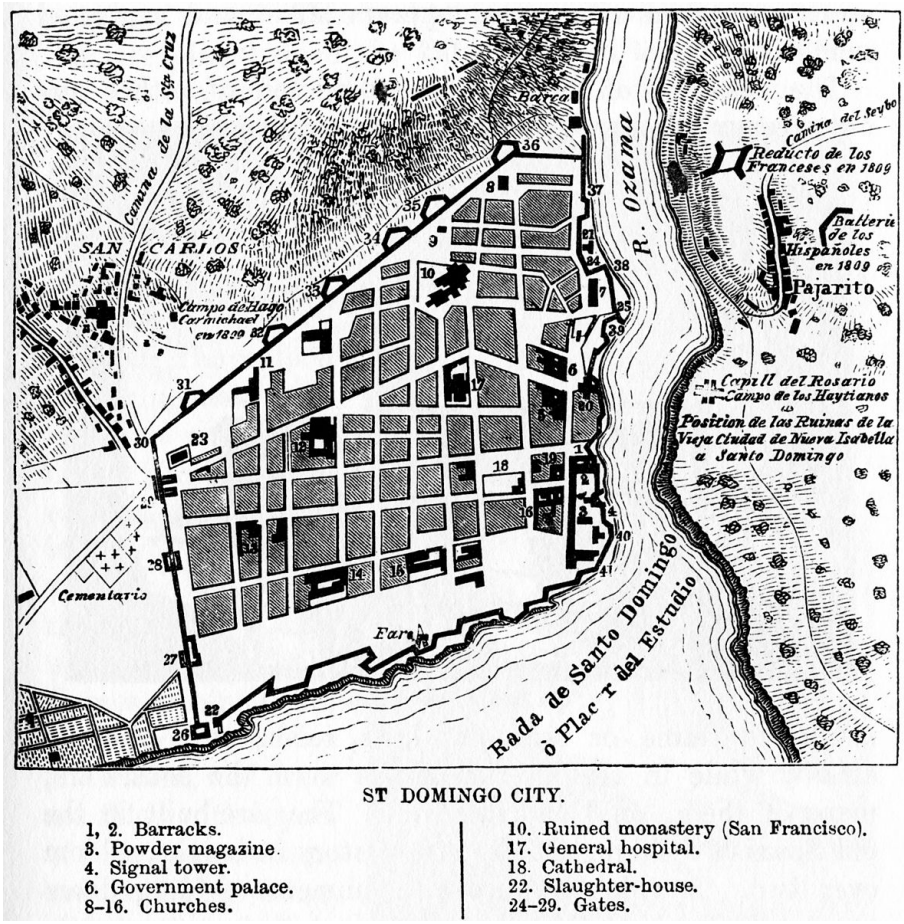
The aforementioned chapters were designed with the goal of progressively answering these questions, hopefully illustrating not only my investigative process but also the lineage of how I arrive at my arguments. Underlying all of this is a hypothesis that is based on my anecdotal experiences. The hypothesis is that aesthetically similar environments erode our ability to relate to the environment around us, resulting in existential confusion or disassociation from urban spaces. If the urban form and aesthetic are increasingly standardizing globally, then a conversation assessing the possible negative effects seems pertinent. The assumption then arises that such a conversation could change the way we view the design of cities, encouraging a more heterogeneous and thoughtful approach. The following is therefore an attempt at generating such a conversation, addressing the ontological effects of an urban developmental practice moving towards standardization.

CHAPTER 1 _
The act of emptying space – a contextual overview

At first, the idea of a global homogenized architectural practice seemed elusive to grasp, a notion shrouded in the complexities of diverse cultures, historical contexts, and evolving design paradigms. The very idea of describing something "global" appeared as a momentous and confusing task. Yet, as I began to peel back the layers of this homogenizing development, a red thread emerged— an intricate interplay of power dynamics, colonial legacies, and ideological shifts that have created conditions of uniformity across previously diverse landscapes. It became apparent that not only was there a specific context in which these urban environments have converged aesthetically, but that they also had specific points of origin. The following is therefore an attempt to provide a historiography of contemporary architectural homogenization. While it encompasses several complex historical periods, movements, and events that I cannot claim to successfully encapsulate, the goal here is to illustrate that there is a specific history to the existence of skyscrapers and grid systems observed in contemporary urban environments. As a result, a recurring theme appears. Deliberate acts of "emptying" space to dominate, improve, manifest or reconstruct is observed as a central dynamic of the historical processes described here. The ensuing historiography will unveil how this intentional emptiness, be it the imposing grid-systems of colonial settlements or the towering symbols of modernity, plays a pivotal role in shaping the aesthetic identity of our global urban landscapes. Furthermore, I investigate key critiques in the field of urban planning that emerged contemporaneously with these developments, providing an overview of literary contributions to the critique of architectural homogenization.

Arguably, the first prominent example of a global homogenization of architecture can be found in the extensive colonial legacies of pre-industrial European superpowers. With a political behavior largely defined by extraction of natural resources, subjugation of indigenous populations and rapid domination of "unexplored" environments, the implementation of domestic architectural styles in colonizer settlements served to enforce these behaviors, both physically and symbolically. The earliest example would be the settlement of Santa Domingo during the brutal Spanish colonization of Hispaniola in 1493 (Neill:2008:10). The city's early architecture was defined by a grid

ordering of sturdy structures of stone, only navigable with proficiency in the Latin alphabet (Neil:2008:11). This served multiple purposes; for one, the insistent nature of its towering structures symbolizes the legitimacy of the Spanish conquest over the "primitive" environment of Hispaniola. Also, the aesthetically homogenous and foreign architecture, further made intelligible by its alphabetic navigation, made its urban landscape confusing and intimidating for the soon-to-be enslaved indigenous Taíno people (Neill:2008:11).



Stern geometric grids defined the colonial settlement of Santa Domingo (Fig. 1)

Finally, the city would serve as both a physical and symbolic representation of the promise of the exuberant riches that could be extracted on the island by providing the infrastructure and social organization to do so (Neill:2008:11). The practice of utilizing domestic architecture to exert dominance over colonized environments by colonizing powers is described by renowned decolonial semiotician Walter Mignolo

(1941-) as an act of "emptying space" (Mignolo:1995:260). Mignolo argues that the European conceptualization of colonized territories as "new" or "discovered" provided a legitimizing claim to impose a hegemonic world view. Mignolo writes here:

"Once something was declared new, and the printing press consolidated the idea among the literates, the descriptions of people for whom nothing was new about the place they were inhabiting, except for the arrival of a people strange to them, were suppressed. Space and place followed patterns similar to time and memory…" (Mignolo:1995:259)

By declaring the territories as "new discoveries", the space was made empty, without ownership, and therefore ready to be settled in "similar patterns" to that of the architecture and urban settlements from back home, creating an extension of "Europe". The practice employed by the Spanish on Hispaniola would see itself repeated endlessly, as they conquered most of Latin American territories in the following centuries (Neill:2008:23), creating a multitude of aesthetically and structurally similar cities. Furthermore, this strategy would be adapted to a great degree by later colonial powers, also in territories not considered a part of the "New World". As one of numerous colonies established by the Dutch in the Southeast Pacific, the reconstruction of Makassar in Nusantara serves as a prominent example of "emptying" the space of the already well-established port city with the Dutch tearing down several religious sites to construct military structures and administration buildings in their uniform image (Sumalyo:2002:47). During its rule of Punjab in the late 19th century, the British meticulously eroded centuries of the region's complex cultural lineage by imposing their aesthetic preferences on to local artisans and architects (Zubair:2015:252). While the different cultural origins of the respective colonial powers would result in different architectural expressions, the extend of which this practice was put to use would serve to homogenize urban environments that otherwise had or would had been dissimilar on a global scale. However, it is first much later after the construction of Santa Domingo, that European societies would invert this practice towards themselves.

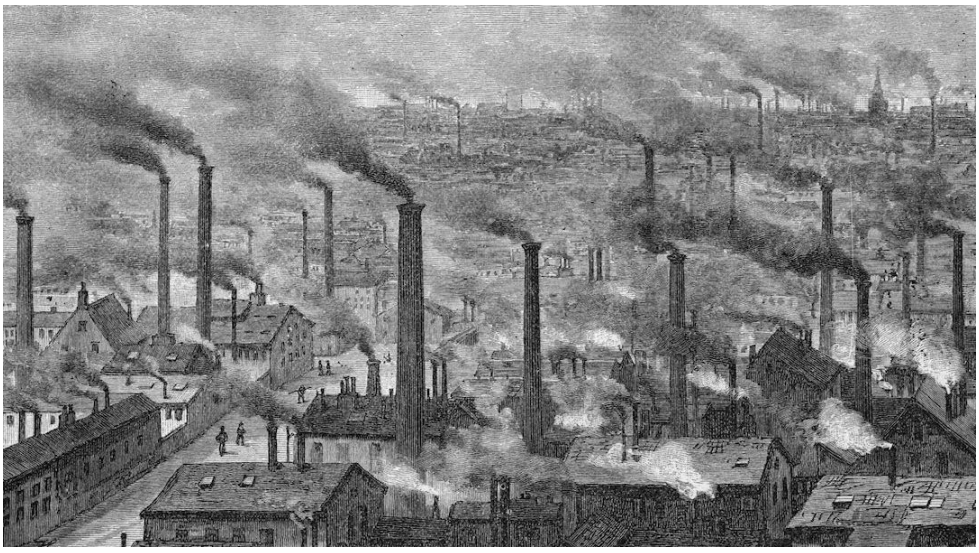
In the late 17th century, a multitude of converging economic, political and ideological processes in Western European society sparked an intellectual movement that would change its ontological outlook fundamentally (Barnett:2003:1). Notable processes include the beginning emergence of a middle class (Wahrman:1995:2), the revival and

re-evaluation of classical and traditional structures of thought as seen during the Renaissance and the Reformation (Barnett:2003:8), and the burgeoning inventions and discoveries within technology and science (Carneiro, Simões:2000:591). The movement would be known as "The Enlightenment", a name given to illustrate an ontological position which considered itself as having reached an illuminated perspective on a once darkened and blurry world. While the Enlightenment encompassed many more differing perspectives than it is often ascribed (Barnett:2003:1), a unifying underlying assumption was that knowledge about the world around us now was something that could be objectively obtained and rationalized within given systems (Mclennan:1996:638). While the Enlightenment brought forth many structural changes to Western European society, such as the idea of civil liberty, a democratization of education and literacy, and religious secularism (Israel:2006:524), perhaps most important for the future development of architecture that I seek to describe here is the specific conceptualization of "modernity" that was developed during the movement's peak. Powerful societies have on some level always considered themselves as the epitome of "modernity" (Habermas:1981:3). However, the idea of rational, objective knowledge developed during the Enlightenment positioned the human, more specifically the western man, as above other lifeforms and modes of human existence. The western man was no longer positioned at the top by the virtue of God but instead by the virtue of his superior and inherent ability to perceive the world more clearly, hereby making him the most "progressive" or "modern". It would soon evolve into a consciousness that saw itself as the optimal mind, at the end of history (Habermas:1981:5). Philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1929-) argues that this particular instance of self-proclaimed "modernity" represents an unprecedented rejection of the past:

"Individual epochs lose their distinct forces. Historical memory is replaced by the heroic affinity of the present with the extremes of history: in a sense of time wherein decadence immediately recognizes itself in the barbaric, the wild and the primitive. We observe the anarchistic intention of blowing up the continuum of history, and we can account for it in terms of the subversive force of this new aesthetic consciousness" (Habermas:1981:5)

Similar to the way Mignolo describes how colonizing powers "emptied" the space of the conquered territories to legitimize the conquest, Habermas' description of the modernity consciousness that manifested with the Enlightenment could be argued to

describe knowledge itself, historical memory, turning into something "new" and to be "discovered". The scientific, rational, "enlightened" lens of the western man thus became the only way to generate meaningful understandings and change in the world going forward, as all previous or different modes of knowledge were rendered hollow, "empty space". This in turn provided new legitimacy for the continued domination and extraction of non-European societies in an increasingly secularizing domestic political environment (Mignolo:1995:8), but it also generated certain introspections about their own societies. The spirit of novelty that emanated through the Enlightenment was not unequivocally misplaced. Coincidingly and in part due to the Enlightenment itself, Western Europe had by the 19th century undergone massive societal transformation since the Spanish secured the last stone brick of Santa Domingo. With its causalities being too numerous to mention here, this transformation could largely be described as a shift from a feudal, agrarian based social structure to that of an industrialized, capitalist society, encompassing changes to the very nature of the relationship to labor, the state and technology (More:2000:4). While such a transposition altered all planes of society, the space that experienced the most significant alteration was arguably the city. As factories rapidly emerged around bustling trade ports, ready to process the supply of natural resources coming from the colonies, people flocked to what quickly became urban industrial centers (Antunes:2003:34). The urban population of Western Europe, most notably Britain, therefore skyrocketed in the early half of the 19th century (Antunes:2003:39). Urbanization of this scale and velocity was a novel development.



Factories dominated the urban landscape of 19th century Britain (Fig. 2)

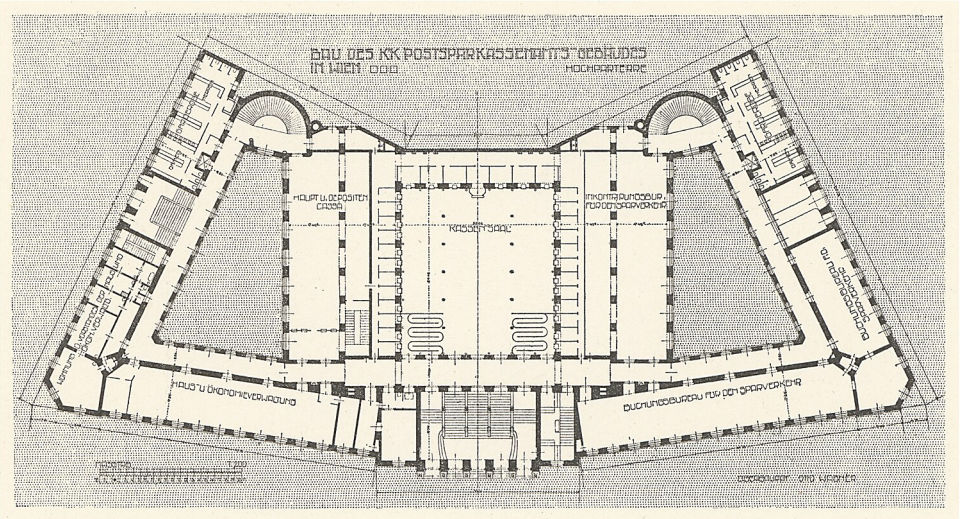
Suffice to say, infrastructures such as waste management, firefighting and proper policing were severely lacking (Davenport:2020:455). Furthermore, there was little planning of the urban anatomy, resulting in sprawling, labyrinthian networks of overlapping neighborhoods. The state of the urban condition in 19th century Western Europe is aptly summarized by contemporary political theorist Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in his description of London:

"The East End of London is an everspreading pool of stagnant misery and desolation, of starvation when out of work, and degradation, physical and moral, when in work. And so in all other large towns—abstraction made of the privileged minority of the workers…" (Engels:2005:14)

Perhaps somewhat ironically, the spatial centers of power within Western Europe had evolved to illustrate the exact opposite of the ideals put forth in the Enlightenment. For what good was an idea of rationality, order and progress, if what one saw when walking in the streets was chaos, senselessness and degradation? It would therefore not take long for architects and the emerging field of urban planning to develop responses that would imbue spatial organization with these "enlightened" ideals. One of the first to rise to the occasion was the Viennese architect Otto Wagner (1841-1918). Standing on a substantive architectural legacy comprised of several traditionalist projects (Mallgrave:1988:5), the Artibus museum (Mallgrave:1988:6) and the Vienna stock exchange (Mallgrave:1988:5) to name a few, Wagner shocked the architectural community with the publication of the revolutionary work, "Modern Architecture: A Guidebook for His Students to this Field of Art" (Moderne Architektur) in 1895. Being simultaneously appalled and fascinated by the contemporary urban condition, he proposed an entirely new perspective to architecture that would emphasize its responsibility to both embrace but also control the narrative of modern urbanism (Wagner:1988:61). A fundamental proposition brought forth in the work was the total rejection of the past, both in ideology and practice, in favor of becoming a champion for the ordered and progressive urban society:

"It therefore cannot be surprising to hear that we should see in architecture the highest expression of man's ability, bordering on the divine!" (Wagner:1988:62)

Wagner argued that the architect should be at the forefront of technological and societal development, utilizing only the newest construction methods and the most advanced theory to achieve their goals (Wagner:1988:70). This entailed, for Wagner, an almost complete abandonment of traditional form language, ornamentation and practice, for it would only bug down the architect's newly realized abilities. Instead, the architect should focus its efforts solely on assessing the urban citizen's "needs" (Wagner:1988:68), meaning that the function of a project, its practical qualities, should take precedence over style or symbolism. In essence, Wagner's thoughts could be viewed as a spatial manifestation of the conceptualization of modernity that took hold in the peak of the Enlightenment. It positions the architect at the forefront of history, giving them the mandate and imbuing them with the "divine" potential to empty space in favor of their own progressive and ordered structures.



The Austrian Postal Savings Bank is considered to be the first building constructed after Wagner's new doctrine, featuring symmetrical structuring and an aluminum skeleton (Fig. 3)

In an environment of boiling dissatisfaction with urban environments and emerging novel technologies within materials and infrastructure (Graham, Marvin:2001:40), Wagner's ideas would take serious hold in urban planning and architectural practice in the start of the 20th century western world. A movement was consolidated under the larger cultural ideology of "Modernism", seeking to position its efforts as a quintessential, universal form of spatial organization and design. Architectural Modernism

conjured a distinct aesthetic language defined by cutting edge building technologies at the time, producing projects proudly showcasing their inclusion of plate-glass, steel and re-enforced concrete. Furthermore, the movement would engage heavily with urban organization, insisting on the belief that the urban condition was a puzzle that could ultimately be solved, if given enough attention (Koren:1994:26). This resulted in architectural products and urban planning projects that, intentionally, were highly replicable. A prevalent example of Modernism's insistent aesthetic language and utopian, universalist spatial organization can be found in the works and thoughts of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (1887-1965), more publicly known as Le Corbusier. While his political beliefs were of a heterogenous nature throughout his career, ranging from being a champion of French syndicalism to a short-lived yet intensive flirt with fascism (Fishman:2021:3), Le Corbusier insisted on the urban planner, the architect, to be the creator of a new era (Corbusier:1986:1). By the power of imagination and their capability for "pure creation" (Corbusier:1986:1), they would bring order and harmony to the world, ending our history of political and cultural strife. This was possible due to the advantages of industrial society, in which it was now feasible to mass produce these "final" solutions:

"These people, too, claim their rights to a machine for living in, which shall be in all simplicity a human thing" (Corbusier:1986:279)

Here, Le Corbusier expressed his ideal for the home, the neighborhood, and even the city itself to be considered a machine perfected through industry. Le Corbusier's vision of how this would practically occur can be observed in his "Radiant City" (Ville Radieuse), in which he constructed a concrete proposal for a reconstruction of Paris in 1922. The city was designed to provide for what Le Corbusier considered essential qualities of a democratic urban life, namely easy access to green recreational areas, streamlined modes of housing and reduced traffic (Montavon et. al.:2006:2).

The plan was to divide the city into a grid-system surrounding identical structures, built in increasing verticality towards the center. The aforementioned amenities would be distributed into predefined zones to ensure clear communication of engagement. With its symmetrical organization and interchangeable aesthetic profile, no place in the Radiant City held particular importance over another, further accentuating its democratic intentions (Fishman:2021:6). Insisting on the project's novelty, Le Corbus-

ier did not incorporate any of Paris' pre-existing urban organization, thereby allowing the Radiant City to exist wherever needed (Aoki: 1993:730). Perhaps this also helps to explain why Le Corbusier's Radiant City never came to be. The project illustrated an inherent tension between the environmentally reconstructive ideals of Modernism and the already-existing metropolises of Western Europe. Therefore, Modernism would see its most prolific adaptations elsewhere, where "empty space" was abound.

A model of the´ Radiant City shows the grid ordering of Corbusier's" perfect" city (Fig. 4)

As two world wars thoroughly decimated the previously unrivalled geo-politic relevance of Western European powers, two new superpowers rose to take their place. In the west, the United States had managed to industrialize rapidly, in part due to the demands of weaponry and mechanical infrastructure during wartime (Aoki:1993:747). Its territories had also remained relatively unspoiled in comparison to its European allies. Being at the forefront of economic and technological development, urban expansion became a paramount endeavor. While urban centers akin to its European counterparts did already exist, examples being New York or Chicago (Aoki:1993:738), they were much younger in age and did therefore not have the same historical complexity.

A construction worker tightening steel beams
on the Empire State Building of New York City (Fig. 5)

This, alongside the United States' industrial and technological prowess, allowed for the mass emergence of skyscrapers and superblocks in the American urban composition (Aoki:1993:738). Vertical, geometric structures defined by their glass and steel components became symbolic and physical monuments to the growth and domination of the American economy (Aoki:1993:738). Being originally developed to combat urban sprawl and social inequality by European thinkers like Le Corbusier, the sleek, uncompromising skyscraper was now synonymous with the might and modernity of American capitalism. To the east the Soviet Union had undertaken its own momentous industrial project under the brutal rule of Joseph Stalin (Levine:2018:46). Having undergone years of political reconstruction after the revolution, the Union turned its attention towards its spatial environment, seeking to imbue it with the values of a new communist society. Soviet architects were heavily inspired in this regard by the reconstructive ideals of Modernism (Levine:2018:48). They sought to fix the problems of the citizen by urban design, and so began the infamous lineage of Soviet housing and urban planning (Kalyukin, Kohl:2020:1770). Entire neighborhoods were constructed in carefully designated zones with structures of identical aesthetic rising up to fill the empty space.

These neighborhoods, sometimes even whole cities, illustrated the universal and omnipresent might of the Soviet Union, serving to build the narrative of a unified and equal society.

The town of Onesti in Soviet Romania was built entirely from the ground up with prefabricated panels and concrete castings (Fig. 6)

What was once a utopian vision for the small architectural avant-garde of Western Europe had by the mid-20th century turned into a catalyst of urban development and aesthetic for the primary powers of the world. It was also at this time that the broader ideology of western Modernity would face serious critique in the academic environment, a critique that would extend to the disciplines of architecture and urban planning. An eminent voice in this field was the urban theorist, Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), who staunchly opposed the top-down, universalist urban planning taking place in her home city of New York. In the field-defining work "The Death and Life of Great American Cities", Jacobs argued that cities are self-organizing systems and therefore are impossible to plan effectively from a top-down perspective (Jacobs:1996:4). Attempting to do so ignores the heterogenous needs of its inhabitants (Jacobs:1996:152) and erodes its particular cultural and social fabric by implementing sterile, homogenous environments (Jacobs:1996:187). To Jacobs, these consequences of the universalist, reconstructive ideals put forth by Modernism were already deeply felt in

the American urban condition. Another contemporary critic, Henri Lefevbre (1901-1991), sought to undermine modernist urban planning by calling it an "abstraction" (Lefevbre:1991:6). By attributing the architect with a divine potential to solve social problems, Modernism had conceptually isolated the field of architecture from its surrounding cultural and political economy and has therefore become deterministic on the functionality of space (Lefevbre:1991:71). For Lefevbre, this produced a certain kind of urban citizen:

"Modern spatial practice might thus be defined – to take an extreme but significant case – by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project. Which should not be taken to mean that motorways or the politics of air transport can be left out of the picture. A spatial practice must have a certain cohesiveness, but this does not imply that it is coherent" (Lefevbre:1991:38)

Under the approach of a top-down, planned perspective, the urban citizen's life is reduced to a series of functional interactions, much like a mathematical equation. Lefevbre argued, that this was hardly a healthy way to view the constituents of cities. Urban space and its organization should primarily be viewed as "social", a dialectic amalgamation of its material, political and cultural properties (Lefevbre:1991:70). What becomes apparent in both these critiques is the problematic tendency within modernist urban planning to view space as being entirely reconstructable. It is argued that it is simply impossible to turn space into the clean slate necessary for these projects, and no matter how well they function, the underlying history and social fabric will "taint" it. Space is simply never empty.

Despite these critiques, the influence of Modernism continued to seep out of Europe. Former European colonies, seeking to realize themselves as modern nations, employed modernists to construct projects that would legitimize their newly manifested democratic and forward-thinking vision. Notable examples of this phenomenon were the construction of entirely new capitals as seen in Le Corbusier's Chandigarh in India (Bharne:2011:100) or Oscar Niemeyer's (1907-2012) and Lúcio Costa's (1902-1998) Brasília in Brazil (Stierli:2013:10). In the later part of the 20th century, East Asian countries would illustrate the re-occurring dynamic in this historiography, namely that an exploding growth of industrial activity is certainly followed by urban expansion. Cities such as Tokyo, Hong Kong or Singapore became spatial manifestations of what would become known as the "East Asian Miracle" (Rowe:2005:5).

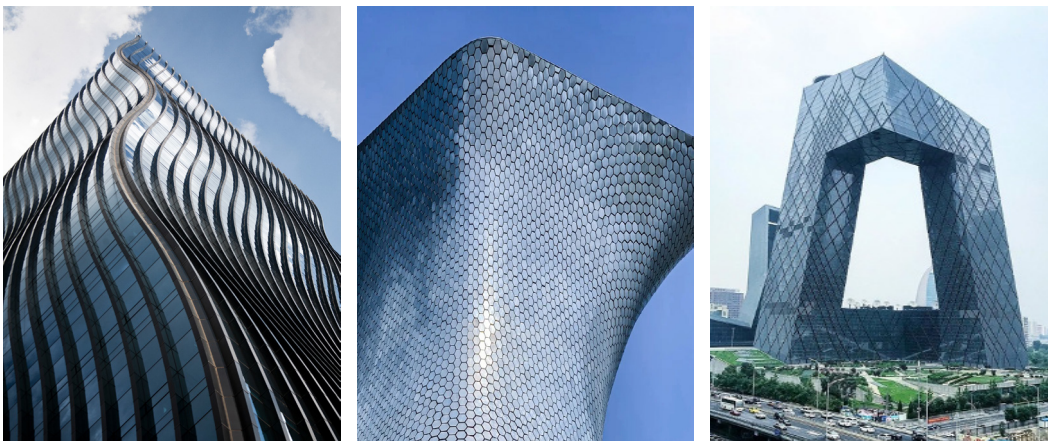
Skylines of Tokyo, Singapore and Hong Kong at night – which is which? (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 9)

Although they were all cities with an immensely rich history, this new economic energy was formatted around business centers and state of the art housing consisting of glass and steel skyscrapers. The cities' towering skylines became synonymous with their identity. In Latin America, a similar yet more ambiguous urban development had taken place. These young nations had attempted industrializations of their own to varying success (Love:1995:394). By the 1980's, economic decline was so apparent that it is often referred to as "the lost decade", and so began years of neo-liberal economic practice, ushered in by the increasingly powerful World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Almandoz:2006:109). This attracted the attention of large international corporations who soon began to populate the vast urban centers of the region with imposing headquarters (Almandoz:2006:110), usually in the form of high-rises. While the neo-liberal turn of Latin America did not succeed in turning the economic situation of its nations around, it did irreversibly change its urban landscape (Almandoz:2006:110), and it was therefore not an unusual sight to have the shining glass-façade of a skyscraper mirror a reflection of an adjacent slum.

Going into the 21st century, the contemporary skyline of cities all around the globe were largely defined by their vertical structures featuring little ornamentation and built in the prevailing materials of glass, steel, and aluminum. Even regions such as Southeast Asia, West Africa and the Middle East feature prominent urban landscapes of these characteristics, and one need only to look at metropolises like Dubai, Kuala Lumpur or Lagos to witness the prevailing endurance of this mode of urban con-

struction. While Modernism no longer serves as the direct inspiration for this urban organization and aesthetic, as the ideology didn't survive the ever-growing mountain of critique, its presence still resonates deeply within the identity of newer, prevalent styles. While movements such as Neo-Futurism (Marotta:2021:34), Parametricism (Schnabel:2007:239) and Deconstructivism (Hoteit:2015:123) have developed their own principal directions, they built on Modernist principles in their insistence on the inclusion of new technologies as well rejecting the particular traditionalism of their project's surroundings.

Boxy skyscrapers define the skylines of Latin-American metropolises like Santiago, São Paulo and Mexico City (Fig. 10, Fig. 11, Fig. 12)



The neo-futurist "Dongdaemun Design Plaza" In Seoul, the parametric "Museo Soumaya" in Mexico City and the deconstructivist "CCTV Headquarters" in Beijing
are all vertical structures of glass and steel (Fig. 13, Fig. 14, Fig. 15)

Perhaps most prevalent is the movement known simply as “International Style” (Mgbemena, Okonta:2018:30), which while it developed coincidingly with Modernism, escaped heavy critique by focusing more on the minimalist aesthetic principles instead of the utopian, reconstructive ideals of Modernism. Readers will recognize this style in the boxy, unassuming structures of “non-places” (Augé:2020:75) such as airport hotels, parking houses, banks and shopping malls.

The Hilton Hotel at Copenhagen Airport (Fig. 16)

As urban space increasingly homogenizes over the globe, the critique, that saw its beginnings at the time of Jacobs and Lefevbre, is ever growing. In recent years, criticism directed towards the aesthetic similarity of the modern urban condition has surfaced to a great degree. In “The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance”, contemporary architect Douglas Spencer argues that neoliberal practice has incentivized architecture firms to standardize their expressions in order for them to remain competitive (Spencer:2016:28). This in turn influences the urban citizen, turning them into a “neoliberal subject” (Spencer:2016:34) by surrounding them with architecture that permeates suggestions to strive for economic self-realization but ultimately serves to obscure the transparency of social and political inequalities. The homogenous environment therefore conditions citizens to the dynamics of a capitalist world-market by obscuring their sense of local, cultural belonging, eroding their ability to realize the causal links between inequality and neoliberal economic policy (Spencer:2016:44). Another critique of homogenization’s impact is as a dynamic of residing and ongoing colonial

legacies. In “Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past, Rebellions for the Future” by Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten, contemporary architectural practice is explored as a colonial dynamic, perpetuating control and domination that relies in previously established power structures from colonial heritages.

Skylines of geographically dispersed and recently developed cities of
Dubai, Kuala Lumpur and Lagos (Fig.17, Fig. 18, Fig. 19)

By examining colonial legacies around the world, it is argued in the book, that architectural homogenization has been a way for dominating forces to erode the cultural and socio-economic practices of indigenous communities and populaces, placing them in environments that are foreign and devoid of possibilities for self-actualization (Avermaete et. al.:2010:52). Even after the end of traditional colonial rule, western powers in their new forms, corporations, colonize urban environments of the Global South by implementing standardized architecture after western principles (Avermaete et. al.:2010:55). Whether one attributes architectural homogenization’s effects to either capitalistic or neo/ post-colonial processes, a common effect described is the erosion of cultural and social agency of urban citizens. These modern critiques therefore re-iterate the harmful tendency of this type of architecture to view the space it occupies as “empty”, which ultimately destabilizes its local context.
It is in this environment of growing criticism that the efforts of this work also lie. The ontological disturbance caused by homogenization that I investigate resonates with the described cultural and social destabilization of these deliberate acts of emptying space. Through this historiography and literature review, a particular picture of

global architectural homogenization has emerged. It draws links to the colonial heritage, philosophical convictions and urban developments of the Western hemisphere, crystalizing particularly in the architectural movement of Modernism. However, the question of how architectural practice homogenized so effectively is still unanswered. Was it through the idea of western modernity, enforced through continued colonial activity and the rise of the United States as a superpower? Did the emergence of capitalism entice homogenizing habits? Maybe it was simply a consequence of an increasingly interconnected, "globalized" world? In the following chapter I will explore these questions, seeking to conceptualize architectural homogenization as a contemporary global phenomenon through the lens of academic theorizations of "globalization".

CHAPTER 2 _
Homogenizing forces – conceptualizing a global process

In the previous chapter, I provided a picture of a lineage of urban planning and ideological aesthetic that have spread rapidly on a global scale. Certain re-occurring relations began to appear in this historiography. Urban expanse seems to be completely interlinked with the advent of industrial progress and economic momentum. Ambitions of "modernity" realized through spatial reorganization appear to be a common practice, not just in Western Europe, but globally. The very idea of being able to "empty space" to imbue a place with new purpose is deemed a possible strategy for urban planning. It becomes apparent that these re-appearing phenomena relate to a larger convergence of practices than architecture. The notion of a nation "industrializing" supposes a commonly accepted trajectory for economic development. A desire to modernize becomes a central part of the narrative for both old and new forms of state and political culture. By virtue of emptying, older cultural behaviors and practices are downplayed in favor of new cultural identities. Therefore, it seems that the homogenization of architectural practice is a part of several global processes showing signs of standardization and homogeneity. This is well reflected in the field of social scientific academia that engages with the conceptualization, causalities, and effects of "globalization". In "Theories of Globalization", sociologist William I. Robinson (1959-) provides a comprehensive literature review, comparing commonly found similarities and tensions in globalization theories. One of the identified common themes is the notion of a "world" culture, where theorists engage with the idea of a globe with shared cultural values, practices and patterns of consumption:

"Homogenization theories see a global cultural convergence and would tend to highlight the rise of world beat, world cuisines, world tourism, uniform consumption patterns and cosmopolitanism" (Robinson:2008:140)

they usually refer to a "global convergence" of practices that are observable and attempts to attribute globalization with a standardizing property that erodes cultural variance in favor of uniform approaches and expressions. However, while the assumption of global homogeneity is shared amongst these theorists, wildly different

causalities are attributed to why this happens and what effects it has on societies. In this chapter, I will engage with such theorists. I do this to gain a comprehensive understanding of the larger, underlying processes that have led to the homogenization of aesthetic and form in global urban architectural practice. If the homogenizing forces of our "globalized" world can be grasped theoretically, I can, along with the findings from the previous chapter, arrive at a substantiated conceptualization of architectural homogenization.

The emergence of industrial technology, which enabled the construction of replicable products, was highlighted in the previous chapter. This allowed the mass production of goods and structures, a production previously bound to its local context. Furthermore, the factory itself was a replicable entity and could essentially be cloned to upscale production to an even higher degree. One could perceive this as a significant advancement in technology's impact on homogenization, as it streamlined and expanded the production of industrial goods globally. In the later part of the 20th century, new technological advancements would take this relationship to a new level. While there was certainly industrial progress in this period, the invention of computer systems and later the Internet created a novel knowledge environment, ushering in a new era of global communication.

Docklands area, Melbourne Austrialia (Fig. 20)

For sociologist Manuel Castells (1942-), this began a new world culture of shared consumer patterns, aesthetic preferences and standardizing practices, largely being

a consequence of these new digital communication technologies, or "ICT's" (Castells:2008:82). Castells names this new culture the "Network Society", emphasizing the importance of networks as a mode of social organization (Castells, Cardoso:2005:4). Up until the creation of ICT's, industrial prowess secured an economy's lead on the world market. However, as these new technologies drastically increased the pace in which information was processed, stored, and transmitted, knowledge itself quickly became more valuable than the tangible means of traditional industry. Castells takes issue with calling this new paradigm an "information" society, arguing that knowledge has always been crucial for all societies:

"Often, the emerging society has been characterized as information society or knowledge society. I take exception with this terminology— not because knowledge and information are not central in our society, but because they have always been so, in all historically known societies. What is new is the microelectronics-based, networking technologies that provide new capabilities to an old form of social organization: networks." (Castells, Cardoso:2005:4)

Instead, the novelty comes in the form of a newly realized strength in networks. Castells argues, that due to the emergence of ICT's, networks as a mode of social organization have reached a level of stability, that allows their flexible and adaptable nature to flourish without hindrance from their previous limits (Castells, Cardoso:2005:4). Networks are defined as a series of interconnected phenomena that are linked together through ICT's and advancement in transportation technologies. They represent links of information being exchanged between parties of common interest, allowing for an unprecedented consolidation of knowledge which enables cooperation and opportunity on a new scale. Networks can therefore not be reduced to their individual parts, as it is the network itself that ensures an output otherwise not realizable. The interlinked paths of transmittance, storage and usage is an inherent quality of networks (Castells:2008:78). This intrinsic interconnectedness can be argued to facilitate a homogenizing global environment in several ways; Culturally, global networks can disseminate ideals, behaviors, values and traditions. The global exchange of culture can therefore create certain favored cultural practices. Economically, an economy driven by information will assume a hierarchy of such knowledge, standardizing what is considered valuable. What has been proven successful in one environment can quickly be distributed elsewhere. Politically, this can allow for increased influence from powerful

institutions or multinational corporations that want to promote certain practices over others. Networks can become channels for increased distribution of power relations, leading to monopolized control in political practice. For Castells, this is all made possible through the technological development of ICT's.

While most theorists acknowledge the role of technology in global convergence, it could be argued that technology is still contingent on underlying systems or power-structures and therefore does not on its own cause standardization. One theorist exploring this is the human geographer David Harvey (1935-), who argues that while technological development has allowed for the compression of time and space (Harvey:1990:260), it is doing so because of the underlying pressure for profit accumulation under a capitalist world economy (Harvey:1990:343).

Facade of the Marriot Marquis hotel in Bangkok, Thailand (Fig. 21)

Capitalism as an economic model, later often defined in a hyper-realized form as "neo-liberalism", has spread globally within the last fifty years (Harvey:2006:145). It manifests itself as an almost "hegemonic" paradigm, affecting not only economic practice but transgresses into a constituent of cultural values, political behavior and social organization (Harvey:2006:146). In a century marked by the lived experience of brutal regimes and authoritarian rule, the ideas of "freedom", "unconfined opportunity" and "liberty" that became semantically linked with neo-liberal economic practice presented an alluring foundation for its implementation (Harvey:2006:146).

The idea of capitalism in its purest form supposes that a synthesis of a free market and individual liberty will develop an overall improvement to the human condition, as the market will self-regulate to take care of its constituents' needs and will allow for growth of resources (Harvey:2006:145). The state is to guarantee the liberty of these systems to enact their own agency, even transnationally, and then otherwise limit its intervention. However, Harvey argues that these values of freedom merely serves as justification for the escalation of capitalism (Harvey:2006:149), hiding the reality of its often imposed and destabilizing execution (Harvey:2006:146). While the idea of capitalism is to generate a liberated economic environment that by the nature of demand will provide effective goods and services, what actually develops is a certain logic that incentivizes profit accumulation over anything else:

"But analysis also points up exploitable contradictions within the neoliberal agenda. The gap between rhetoric (for the benefit of all) and realization (for the benefit of a small ruling class) increases over space and time… The idea that the market is about competition and fairness is increasingly negated by the facts of extraordinary monopolization, centralization and internationalization of corporate and financial power" (Harvey:2006:157)

According to Harvey, this underlying logic generates global standardization conditions. The permanence of this ambition, backed by an endorsing geopolitical environment, actuates practices that can easily be replicated, marketed and consumed in as many contexts as possible (Harvey:1990:260). The affected practices are many, ranging from the standardization of industrial goods to the streamlining of education, all made to fit into a logic of measurable outcomes and market-oriented approaches. A practice has to be translatable within the world economy of capitalism if it is to survive in a global context (Harvey:1990:343). Harvey, therefore, states that capitalism compresses time and space itself. By moving everything closer together, the world becomes more "manageable", increasing the availability of markets in which to maximize profit. Moving beyond just making markets available, Harvey argues that capitalist actors are impelled to mold the inclinations and needs of consumers, essentially creating new markets by affecting cultural practices and values (Harvey:1990:261). Properties of cultural practice such as expression of identity, self-actualization and social acceptance are made subject to influence in order to generate a cultural environment that desires certain products. Often, this process follows formulaic, stand-

ardized templates (Scott, 2001:20). According to Harvey, the enduring dynamic of this capitalist logic on a global scale therefore conditions the convergence of a plethora of practices that otherwise would have had diverging trajectories.

The prevailing presence of capitalism can convey the idea that it is a natural force, born out of an inevitable economic trajectory. However, as both Harvey and other theorists argue, many of the converging processes that are observable in contemporary world society point to a specific place of origin. Investigating the genesis of such homogenizing phenomena as ICT's, industrialism and capitalism all lead to a particular locus of emergence: the western hemisphere. The idea that homogenizing tendencies appear as a product of a geographically and culturally confined origination resonates with the findings from the previous chapter. During colonial rule, a lineage of global western imperialism emerged, and even though it was mostly dismantled by the middle of the 20th century, it continued to exert its cultural, economic, and political influence on the rest of the world. Particularly the geopolitical and cultural presence of the United States, itself an amalgamation of western European cultures, has been characterized as a newer form of western imperialism. Professor of global culture, John Tomlinson (1949-), engages with the effects of such regionally specific influence on global processes in his work "Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction". Tomlinson dissents from the commonly found juxtaposition of culture to economy and politics (a juxtaposition I benevolently have indulged in this work). He argues that culture, viewed as a discourse of "how life should be lived", is necessarily intersectional with economic and political processes (Tomlinson:1991:5).

DLF Cyberhub in Gurgaon, India (Fig. 22)

In this light, a notion of imperialism realized through cultural influence does necessarily also have political and economic causalities and consequences (Tomlinson:1991:9).

However, the juxtaposition is not completely misplaced, as the notion of "culture" allows for an understanding of cases of more intangible influence, not easily identified in traditional descriptions of political or economic dominance (Tomlinson:1991:6). This is not to say, that the contemporary picture of western imperialism cannot be described in such typical terms. The widespread logic of capitalism is hard to separate from the legacy of Western European industrialism and libertarian thought, and recent hyperforms, as found in neoliberalism, are synonymous with the economic presence of the United States (Tomlinson:1991:103). Defining transnational political organizations that aim to generate truly global voices reveals that western powers enjoy a hierarchical advantage (Tomlinson: 1991:15), not to mention the role that these powers' prevailing military efforts and activities play in regions of tension globally. In conjunction with and because of these spheres of influence, the dissemination of a western way of life can be witnessed on a global level. For Tomlinson, this is particularly apparent in the ideal of western modernity (Tomlinson:1991:140). While this ideal certainly entail tangible efforts, such as the insistency on democracy as a political end-goal or the seemingly boundless trust in the progression of technology, it also embodies notions of intangible influence in the cultural fabric of wherever it is imposed. It generates an idea of a shared cultural destiny:

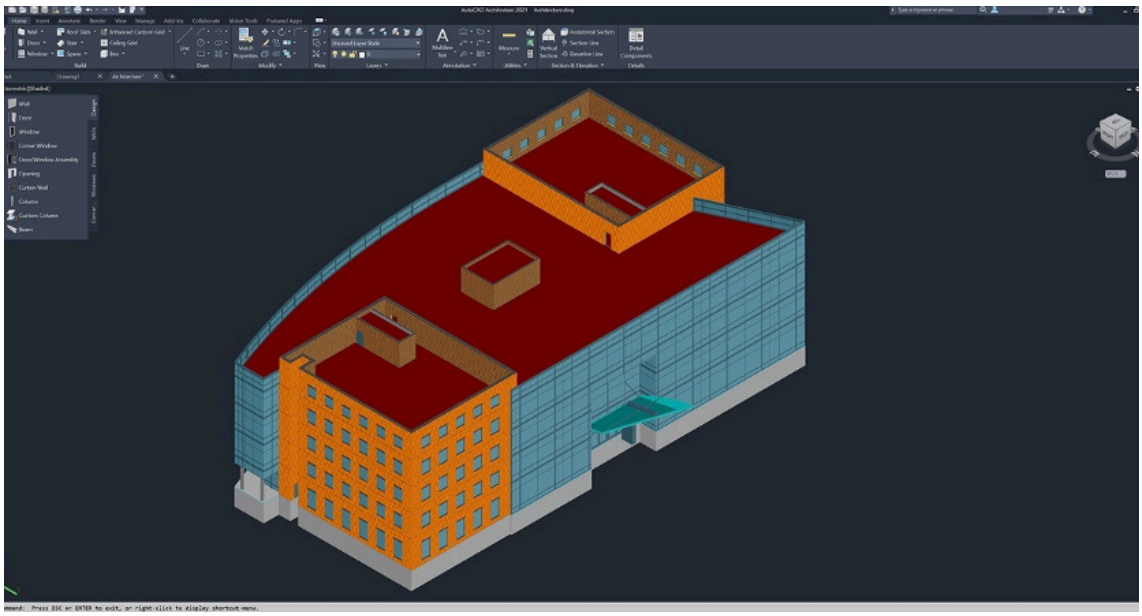
"'Cultural fate' becomes linked with the realization of individual human freedom. Cultures are 'condemned to modernity' not simply by the 'structural' process of economic development, but by the human process of self-development" (Tomlinson:1991:141)

Tomlinson argues here, that the specifically western ideal of self-improvement is internalized in a variety of non-western cultures by declaring it the definitive destiny. The enforced strive to modernity is therefore a prevalent example of how western imperialism serves to homogenize not only political and economic but also broader cultural and social practices globally. By imposing a particular way to view the path, ambition and ideal of one's life over a wide array of cultures and societies, western modernity produces standardized values. Generally, having such an expansive influence originate from one particular culture has resulted in homogenizing tendencies (Tomlinson:1991:108). It is clear that if we are to take Tomlinson's work as an effective description of imperialism, the continued pervasive power of the western hemisphere therefore serves to coalesce practices all over the globe. Through the work of these theorists, causalities to the homogenization of practices over the globe emerges.

As a consequence of advancement in communication technologies, social organization is increasingly delocalized and dissemination of information far spread and rapid. This newly enabled digital interconnectedness can therefore serve to homogenize standards, values and practices by creating a previously unrealizable shared platform. Dominating this platform is the logic of our current capitalist world economy which, through ambitions of profit accumulation, implements and incentivizes standardized practices and replicable goods that are easily translatable within its language. This logic finds its origin in the history of the western hemisphere's global control. By having such a significant global influence surge from one particular culture, homogenization is difficult to escape. This is prevalently exemplified by the idea of western modernity, a culturally specific ideal of life artificially heightened to a universal status. In the beginning historiography, the interlocking effects of technology, capitalism and western imperialism on architectural homogenization already unfolded. However, I will now argue how they have only become more prevalent in the global architectural practice of today. There is no doubt that the invention of industrial technologies has served to homogenize architectural expression and form, as they revolutionized the field by providing new opportunities for structural stability, replicability and verticality. Leaving out the ideological conviction to emphasize utilization of these technologies as witnessed in Modernism, the fact that they drastically increase the speed and availability in construction speaks alone to why they have taken such precedence.

A building constructed by prefabricated panels (Fig. 23)

Industrial technologies certainly create similar environments by their prolific utilization, but it could be argued that ICTs´ exponentially homogenized architectural practice in ways that would further converge the expression of form and aesthetic. While industrial technologies dictate a certain availability and effectiveness of a given material or construction method, ICTs´ homogenizes the very way the architect works. This can be directly observed in the usage of computer-aided design programs (CAD) and building information modelling (BIM) which are inescapable tools in an architect's practice in the 21st century (Pérez-Sánches et. al.:2017:46). These are complicated programs to make and there are therefore only a select few being utilized by the many people in these industries, notable examples being "AutoCAD" and "Revit". Furthermore, ICTs generally provides a platform where inspiration, execution and feedback both internally, within a company, and externally, amongst urban stake shareholders, can be shared rapidly. In the design and organization of architecture, local expertise could be argued as having become increasingly irrelevant as information about these contexts is readily available.



A multipurpose building being formatted in Autocad (Fig. 24)

Global platforms for the discussion and dissemination of architectural ideas and philosophies have also emerged in the form of digital magazines and blog forums. These sites cross-pollinate influence which can have a homogenizing effect. Within tone-setting magazines such as Architectural Digest or Wallpaper* it is observable, how they

operate with a network-oriented approach while promoting certain, centralized design ideals (Degen, Wainwright:2010:156). A specific urban context might also be designed by a firm from the other side of the globe. This is possible due to the strength of networks which allows for an architecture firm to operate in a foreign environment, quickly establishing a relationship to local contacts, regulations and desires. This enables the emergence of multinational firms who produces architecture in many different urban cultures and contexts, often employing similar strategies to these respective places (Sklair:2005:485). It is important to note here that I do not consider technology itself as a primary catalyst for architectural homogenization. Castells often argues that the potential for networks enabled by ICTs are as likely to produce heterogenous social constellations as homogenizing practices (Castells2005:216). The aforementioned design programs are essentially just tools for the architect to create whatever they desire. Likewise, the increased transnational activity within architectural practice might serve to create new architectural cultures, otherwise not realizable. However, while technology itself does not necessarily condition homogenization, it enables it to a degree that previously hadn't been possible. Providing a shared platform, exchange of information and access to similar tools and materials makes the role of ICT in a discussion of architectural standardization unavoidable.

The argument that the underlying principles of capitalism drives the purposes of technological utilization also resonates within contemporary architecture and urban planning. The pursuit of developing ever more efficient, standardized and replicable means of construction is pushed by ambitions of remaining competitive and profitable within the world economy. So, while the technology certainly makes that possible, it could be argued that it supervenes on a logic not necessarily conditioned by technological advancement. Harvey himself has engaged extensively with the effects of capitalism on urban dynamics throughout much of his career. A cornerstone in his argumentation is the idea of capital requiring a spatial fix to avoid becoming vulnerable to economic crisis (Harvey:2015:316). Investing in the development of real estate becomes a method to solidify surplus capital that otherwise could be harmed by inflation, as buying and developing land is generally considered a secure investment. Urbanization therefore becomes a method to "absorb capital accumulation" (Harvey:2015:326). Hence, an increasing amount of urban real estate is owned by agents who value profitably over diverse local needs. According to Harvey, these agents will often employ development strategies that have proven successful elsewhere, a notable one being the

erosion of local communities to create upscale, easily marketable offerings in housing and recreation (Harvey:2015:325). This strategy is aptly described by Harvey as an "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey:2015:324), in which urban land is quite literally taken over and transformed, often only in a few years. Put more simply, Harvey is essentially describing the process known as gentrification. Gentrification is often a deliberate act, becoming an example of how capitalism influences the cultural fabric of inhabitants. This is done primarily by marketing a certain way of life that could be lived in these new developments, promising possibilities of actualization and functionality, all done to make these areas desirable. It is observed by several scholars that this promised "life" embodies strikingly similar characteristics globally, offering the same recreational activities, aesthetic profiles and businesses (Smith:2002:427).

The Abode at Oxford, an in-development neighborhood in Old Kensington, Philadelphia, USA. It neighbors areas with some of the highest recorded drug-addiction statistics in the country (Channel 5:2023) (Fig. 25)

Again, a standardized version of this life becoming desirable for housing consumers is highly sought after by real estate investors, as this will dramatically reduce the need to do localized solutions. This phenomenon is enabled by the global flow of capital which allows international investors to substantially outbid any local initiative when real estate is put up for sale. For cities that lack public funding or have vulnerable real estate fluctuations, this can result in valuable public space quickly being bought up by multinational real estate corporations (Harvey:2015:326) which further erodes the possibility of development done after local desires. In some cases, capitalist practice might even influence the very political organization of a city. In the article,

“Neo-liberalism as creative destruction”, Harvey highlights New York City’s years of bankruptcy in the early 70s. Neoliberal actors, primarily bankers, pushed city government to drastically reduce public spending by selling public land and decreasing investment in infrastructure to achieve a healthy fiscal balance (Harvey:2006:150). This made the city ripe for private real estate investors to take over. So, while New York City regained some economic balance, it lost valuable public space and suffered severely degrading infrastructure that newer fully recovered (Harvey:2006:150). New York City is infamous today for its cost-of-living crisis while simultaneously having a substantial amount of its city-center, sky-rise housing standing empty (Albouy et. al.:2016:17). Vacant buildings are simply not that big of a problem for a large, multinational real estate developer, as they can afford to wait around until a favorable opportunity comes their way. In light of Harvey’s critique of urban capitalism, Tonlinson’s work on the hegemony of the western hemisphere provides a frame in which to uncover the specific catalyst of these urban agents. When investigating these investing actors, they are found to be mostly of western origin. According to Forbes as of 2021, the top 20 largest real estate companies in the world are of western ownership with the first non-western company, Link Real Estate Investment Trust from Hong Kong, taking the 21st place (Kirsch:2021). But real estate conglomerates are not the only important stakeholder in urban development dominated by western companies. In the field of construction this remains largely similar with 7 out of the 10 largest companies being western, the rest coming from China (Ellis:2022). Likewise, the top 20 wealthiest architecture firms all are of western origin, according to an extensive report by the BDC network in 2022 (BD+C Staff:2022).

Gensler Architects (US),
one of the largest architecture firms in the world,
operates in most continents with 53 official offices (Fig. 26)

These statistics indicate that western economies largely dictate the flow of capital within urban architecture. It is also therefore safe to assume, that these tone-setting companies likely provide the base model of practice for non-western companies that

wishes to engage in these industries. The western presence in the global market share of key architectural and urban planning industries may also help to explain why the aesthetic and form language of Modernism and its derivatives have endured and disseminated so effectively. As Tonlinson argues, western modernity is framed as the definition of "human freedom" (Tonlinson:1991:141). The self-realization and personal freedom of urban citizens was, as mentioned in the previous chapter, a key component of architectural Modernism's ideological fabric. With its spread over the globe, Modernism can therefore be argued to have served as a vehicle for disseminating this particular ideal of how life should be lived into many spatial contexts. The underlying ethos of western modernity reverberates in the minimalist, function driven designs of modernist-inspired architecture. The uniformity of modernist structures across various urban landscapes serves as a tangible manifestation of this dissemination. Skyscrapers, minimalist designs, and functional spaces become markers of a prescribed modern lifestyle, perpetuating the hegemonic ideals of the West. The architectural choices made under the influence of Western modernism can therefore be seen as a form of cultural imperialism, where the built environment becomes a canvas for projecting and normalizing a specifically western way of life.

It becomes evident in this investigation, that the homogenization of architectural expressions on a global scale stems from the intricate interplay of industrial and information technologies, the imperatives of capitalism, and the pervasive influence of Western modernity. The advent of industrial technologies accelerated construction methods, while information technologies like CAD and BIM provided a shared platform. Capitalist pursuits of efficiency and profitability, coupled with the spatial fixation of capital, drive this architectural convergence. Furthermore, the hegemony of Western economies and industries, epitomized by the enduring legacy of Modernism, disseminates a specific vision of "how life should be lived" across diverse urban landscapes. The resulting architectural choices manifest as a form of cultural imperialism, projecting and normalizing a distinctly Western way of life. In essence, this complex web of technological innovation, economic dynamics, and Western influence marks a transformative era in global architecture, reshaping urban aesthetic into standardization. Having now investigated the history, conceptualization, critique and manifestation of the architectural development I describe as homogenizing, I would be inclined to consider my position in the field defined. With that being said, the exact problematic nature of this development is still to be uncovered. I have touched al-

ready on some key critiques. Both Spencer and Harvey highlight the superficial and destabilizing life created in urbanism in a world economy of neo-liberalism. Jacobs, Avermeate, Karakayali and Osten critiques top-down implementation, arguing that it erodes the local cultural fabric. However, the aim of this article is to identify the direct ontological effects of architectural homogenization. For this, a different discipline of thought needs to be employed. To investigate the ontological, a way to discuss the very nature of being in space is required. Therefore, the following chapter will engage with the discipline of philosophy, seeking to uncover the importance of one's sense of place.

CHAPTER 3 _
A sense of place – the ontological importance of where one is

Having now arrived at a conceptualization and historical overview of what I consider to be a global trend of architectural expression and form homogenizing, it is time to delve into why the experience of space has importance. After all, it could be argued that the urban citizen is only affected by the form of the city in ways that are functional or structural. If central amenities are ensured and access to these are established in a coherent and accessible manner, would it necessarily matter that it all looks the same? Marxist urban theory tends to take such a perspective, highlighting functional equivalence and quality of infrastructure as central properties of a healthy urban environment (Rose:1984:48). Marxist urban theory might even entertain utilitarian approaches as long as they address these materialist conditions to a satisfactory degree. Harvey is often considered first and foremost a Marxist scholar, and it wouldn't be wrong to state that his critique of the urban condition under a capitalist world economy is functional rather than aesthetic. The negative effects of homogenization he addresses are problematic because the principles of capitalist conduct enforce functional inequality, not because of the homogenization itself. However, as professor of urban studies, Damaris Rose, points out in her paper "Rethinking Gentrification: beyond the uneven development of marxist urban theory", such a perspective runs into an epistemological determinance on structure and function:

"Meanwhile, theoretical and empirical work by marxists has been exclusively preoccupied with those aspects of gentrification that can be directly related to the operation of the law of value in the built environment of capitalist cities… Though some 'social' factors may turn out to be purely contingent empirical phenomena, which should not therefore form part of any theory of gentrification, there are, however, no a priori grounds for considering all 'social' aspects of gentrification to be epiphenomenal." (Rose:1984:52)

By evaluating Marxist approaches to gentrification, Harvey's being one of them, Rose notices a tendency to neglect other constituents of the urban experience. A notable

one is the subjective experience of urban phenomena (Rose:1984:56). Considering this subjective meeting with the urban, it is evident that the experience of urban space encompasses much more than a relationship defined by functional accessibility. The relation between space and cultural aspects, for example, has already been brought to attention in previous chapters. However, the origin of this work lies in a phenomenological experience of ontological disturbance. A disruption to the senses that grasp urban space, an interference with an urban consciousness. It seems, at least in these moments, that there is a "sense of place" within us, through which the places of the city become dynamic entities. Therefore, in this chapter, I will investigate the idea of having a sense of place and why it could be considered an important constituent of the human consciousness. This is done to provide a frame in which to evaluate the ontological effects of architectural homogenization. I will do this through the philosophical school of phenomenology, which, unlike Marxism, encompasses many more constituents than material utility in its investigations of subjective experience.

I would not fault the reader for at this point considering if this "sense of place" is an excessive inquiry into what could be considered a simple point. Is the fact that we relate to the space around us not self-evident? Well, in the discipline of philosophy, where the question of subjective experience is a central inquiry, consciousness was, for a substantial time, considered a separate entity from its surroundings. In Plato's famous "Allegory of the Cave", a story of prisoners in a cave observing shadows become an analogy for how humans' perception of reality is merely a shadow of a true reality (Plato:2010:2). Our senses only allow us to perceive fragments of a greater whole. In the allegory, it is therefore suggested that the material world, as we perceive it, is a faulty, incomplete version of a world of true forms and ideals (Plato:2010:4).

A painting of the different stages of the allegory of the cave (Fig. 27)

Almost 2000 years later, Plato's dualism between the material and the ideal would reverberate in the works of an early modern philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650). Like Plato, Descartes also harbored distrust for the senses, arguing that the fact that they could be deceived should establish knowledge derived from them as uncertain (Descartes:1984:16). In contrast, however our senses may betray us, the human can always be certain that it exists in some capacity (Descartes:1984:17). It is therefore certain that the mind exists. In this way, Descartes effectively separated the body from the mind. Descartes mind-body dualism would take a serious hold in philosophical development going forward, instantiating a plethora of philosophical inquiries through the assured presence of the thinking self. In this setting, the focus shifted from the environment's influence on conscious experience to the mind's construction of that experience. In other words, what is measurable within objective criteria took precedence over intangible subjective experience. While critiques emerged, the problem of the uncertainty of bodily stimuli would haunt philosophy, even in the present day. It is commonly referred to as the "ghost of Descartes" (Ryle:1949:25). It certainly poses a challenge for any ontological investigation into the concept of a sense of place. If one were to follow the tenants of mind-body dualism, a sense of place would be met with the utmost skepticism, since it supposes an aspect of consciousness influenced by uncertain stimuli. Therefore, we should not evaluate urban development based on such a notion, but rather on measurable and clear ideas. However, while bodily stimuli and emotional attachment may be uncertain and subject to deceit, is it really possible to completely disregard their constituency of consciousness? Just because they could be considered unreliable does not mean that they do not exist and hold great importance. A work challenging the cartesian separation of body and mind appeared in 1900. Being titled "Logical Investigations" (Logische Untersuchungen), philosopher Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl (1859-1938) would conduct such investigations into the nature of conscious experience. Husserl argued that we cannot take the structure of experience or consciousness for granted and that it instead should be the sole focus of philosophical investigation (Husserl:2001:144). The very notion of "being" constitutes the world and if its nature would be uncovered, so would the world. Already present in this simple presupposition is a challenge to mind-body dualism. If being, consciousness, constitutes the world, the idea of an objective world that eludes subjective experience becomes arbitrary (Husserl:2001:11). Husserl argued that this inherent connection between the subject and its surroundings is evident because consciousness requires intentionality (Husserl:2001:112). There is a property of "aboutness"

in a consciousness, meaning that its activities are always directed towards something beyond itself. Consciousness is therefore always conscious of something. This something can range from an external property, for example one's home, to an internal object, for example an emotion or idea (Husserl:2001:12). This must necessarily change the way that the objects of the surrounding world are viewed. For Husserl, the notion that there is no consciousness without intention implies that there is also no object without intention (Husserl:2001:35). For if the "being" constitutes the world of objects, the existence of the object, its qualia, becomes dependent on its constitution or intention within the consciousness perceiving it. This further bridges the gap between the physical and the mental, allowing objects to have properties usually associated only with mental states. This quality of "aboutness" inherent in the consciousness and the intentionality of objects entails further critique of the mind-body dualism. Husserl argued that an epistemological consequence of establishing an objective world separated from the subjective experience enforces the idea of being able to categorize phenomena from each other (Husserl:2001:11). While it is certainly possible to distinguish experiences, they are inevitably part of the "horizontal" structure of a conscious life (Husserl:2001:219), meaning that each intentional act both affects and is affected by other intentional acts. The past experiences retained in consciousness and future anticipations contribute to the ongoing narrative of our experience. This horizontal structure becomes apparent to Husserl through the simple idea of a consciousness being cohesive. Without this unity, life would be a series of unconnected, particular experiences (Husserl:2001:167). However, this implied horizontal unity of consciousness does not argue for a pursuit of abstracts, logics, or ideals for Husserl:

"There is naturally, in the singular experiences which correspond to this ideal unity, a certain pervasive common feature, but since the concern of the pure logician is not with the concrete instance, but with its corresponding Idea, its abstractly apprehended universal, he has, it would seem, no reason to leave the field of abstraction, nor to make concrete experiences the theme of his probing interest, instead of Ideas." (Husserl:2001:167)

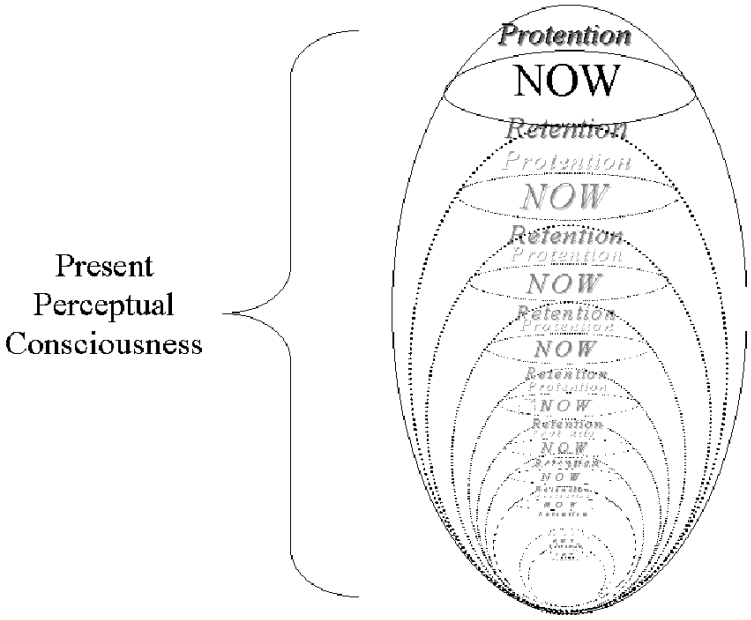
In fact, scientific epistemology should attempt the complete opposite. Husserl critiques the tendency of scientists that employ mind-body dualism to state that they are investigating something particular when in reality they are turning the object of study into an ideal or abstract (Husserl:2001:167). Instead, he argued that one should focus

on the essential, concrete experience of the object and therefore attempt to rid oneself of larger, theoretical assumptions when doing so. So how does Husserl simultaneously critique mind-body dualism for missing the holistic horizontality of lived experience while also critiquing them for lacking focus on the concreteness of a particular experience? This becomes evident in his utilization of the concept "lifeworld" (lebenswelt). It can be seen as a consolidation of the arguments made already and describes the world one lives in as being constituted by one living in it (Husserl:2001:ixxxvi). The lifeworld is therefore a pre-theorized, pre-reflective plane of existence that forms an immediate and intuitive background for lived experience. It is the world as it is given to us in our everyday interactions without philosophical abstraction. The concept therefore consolidates the intentionality of both consciousness and objects into one description. Advocates for mind-body dualism for that reason both misunderstands the essentiality, concreteness of a particular experience by evaluating it with abstract, idealized measures and the holistic, horizontal structure of general lived experience by assuming they can evaluate particular experiences completely separate from each other, according to Husserl (Husserl:2001:167). Nevertheless, the lifeworld, as imagined by Husserl, is not a simple framework. Within the lifeworld, there is a multiplicity of experiences and perceptions. It encompasses the rich tapestry of one's interactions with the world, including sensory perceptions, emotional responses, and practical engagements. These experiences contribute to the unity of the lifeworld. One of such multiple experiences could for example be the nature of embodiment, on how the body interacts with its surroundings (Husserl:2001:118). Another could be social relations and how our interactions with and expressions towards others constitute the lifeworld (Husserl:2001:219). These should both be considered immensely important for any discussion about the existence of a sense of place, and I will return to these constituents of the lifeworld later in the chapter. For now, I will investigate another constituent of consciousness that Husserl held to great importance and that will have particular relevance for the further discussion: the temporal consciousness. For Husserl, the question of what is real should not be pursued through attempts at establishing definitions of everlasting ideals but, on the contrary, through properties of impermanence:

"What is real (real) is the individual with all its constituents: it is something here and now. For us temporality is a sufficient mark of reality. Real being and temporal being may not be identical notions, but they coincide in extension… Should we wish, how-

ever, to keep all metaphysics out, we may simply define 'reality' in terms of temporality. For the only point of importance is to oppose it to the timeless 'being' of the ideal." (Husserl:2001:249)

Temporality becomes, in this way, a critical assessment for defining reality. The answer to why this is can be found in his notion of reality within an individual being "something here and now". For both the particular intentional act and the horizontal unity of conscious life, a synthesis of the retention of the past, the initial impression of the present and the protention of future events serves as a key structure for lived experience (Husserl:2001:249).



The interlocking relationship between the present moment
and the larger horizontality of an experienced life in Husserl's philosophy (Fig. 28)

As a result, time is not passively, steadily passing by, but rather a subjective, dynamic flow that is inherently linked to the structure of consciousness itself. In other words, the sense of time is immensely important to a conscious being. Overall, by establishing this reconsideration of ontology towards the essential question of "being", Husserl attempted to argue for a scientific and philosophical culture that would engage itself with the true nature of the essentiality of consciousness (Husserl:2001:165). Husserl believed that if this was able to be uncovered, the fundamental questions of existence would be answered. This led him to propose a method by which to unveil the na-

ture of phenomena: phenomenological reduction. It is a methodological framework that attempts to reach these essential properties of phenomena by suspending what Husserl called "natural attitudes", meaning biases and everyday assumptions towards the world (Husserl:2001:169). This does not entail a claim to an objective truth, but rather an abandonment of any such preconceived notions of existence, only focusing on the immediate experience with the phenomena. The synthesis of an ontology based on the inherent intentionality of consciousness and the epistemological investigations focusing on identifying the nature of such a consciousness would come to form the philosophical school of phenomenology, of which Husserl is largely considered to be the grandfather of. Its subsequent iterations would see further investigations into the multiplicity of the lifeworld as well as address some key concerns about the groundwork laid by Husserl. However, his work already makes it clear that the subjective experience of space carries immense ontological significance. If conscious experience is characterized by a property of aboutness or intentionality, then the surroundings of said consciousness become a critical part of it. Likewise, objects around us are not passive "things" and they therefore become dynamic entities that imbue meaning. It could consequently be argued that a "sense of place" could describe the dynamic relation, Husserl established between consciousness and a world of objects. Furthermore, Husserl's work provides key considerations in what should constitute a conceptualization of a sense of place. This is first seen in the horizonal structure of intentionality, in which each act of consciousness is part of a larger context or horizon. Places are embedded within broader horizons that include cultural, historical, and social dimensions. Understanding a place involves exploring its connections to a larger context. By the same token, the notion of a lifeworld alludes to a sense of place, as it involves the immediate and embodied experiences within a particular environment. Perhaps the most concrete contribution to understanding a sense of place is the structuring property of Husserl's temporal consciousness. Building on the premise that our perception of time is a subjective flow, places become non-static entities; they evolve and carry a temporal dimension. A sense of place consequently includes the memories associated with a location, the ongoing experiences within it, and the anticipation of future engagements. Furthermore, if temporality defines reality, one's sense of time becomes an immensely important factor, constituting authenticity and relatability within a place.
With Husserl, I have now established a grounding framework in which to understand the importance of a sense of place. While his work is regarded as the birth of phenomenology, it therefore also represents the school in its infancy. With that being said, the

question of "being" and how it relates to its surrounding environment would stay as a central inquiry in the school. Consequently, it is not surprising that the subjective experience of space became a popular point of investigation for several phenomenologists. The work of a later and arguably more prominent phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), represents such an investigation. Heidegger was a distinguished student under Husserl at the university of Freiburg and would in his own philosophical career pursue central phenomenological questions surrounding consciousness and being (Moran:2013:33). However, it would not take long before Heidegger would differ from the teachings of his educator. This expanding ideological rift between him and Husserl particularly manifested with the publication of Heidegger's "Being and Time" (Sein und Zeit) in 1927, just a year before Husserl retired (Moran:2013:33). In the work, Heidegger expressed dissatisfaction with Husserl's insistent focus on the essentiality of consciousness. He saw it as a sort of lingering idealism within Husserl's phenomenology, arguing that the notion of a consciousness isolated and studied independently from its worldly context was as futile as the claim of the existence of a mind separated from the body, as found in mind-body dualism (Heidegger:2010:39). Therefore, Heidegger also took issue with the methodology of phenomenological reduction as he deemed it impossible to rid oneself of "natural attitudes" (Heidegger:2010:49). For Heidegger, there is a potential for phenomenology to go beyond investigations of the structure of consciousness, focusing instead directly on what it means to exist (Heidegger:2010:15). This departure from the key tenants of Husserl's phenomenology into a decisively ontological turn could not be expressed more clearly than in his famous concept of "Dasein":

"Dasein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact in its being this being is concerned about its very being. Thus it is constitutive of the being of Dasein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being. And this in turn means that Dasein understands itself in its being (Sein) in some way and with some explicitness. It is proper to this being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its being. Understanding of being it itself a determination of being of Dasein… The ontic distinction of Dasein lies in the fact that it is ontological" (Heidegger:2010:11)

In these words, Heidegger referred to a being which nature is constituted by the simple fact of its own existential awareness. Dasein, a German term, roughly translates to

"being there" and Heidegger utilized this concept to refer to human existence. With Dasein, human existence is not only a consciousness interacting through intentionality with the world, it is the world itself (Heidegger:2010:12). Dasein can therefore be seen as an ontological expansion of Husserl's "aboutness", in that it describes human existence as inherently contextual. At the same time, this expansion makes the idea of a reduced, pure consciousness observing something impossible. Subjective experience, constituted in its own hermeneutic awareness about "being there", will always be mediated through contextual impressions (Heidegger:2010:378). Despite the differences between his and Husserl's work, Heidegger identified several characteristics of Dasein that are strikingly similar to Husserl's constituents of lived experience. Akin to Husserl's "lifeworld", Heidegger established a notion of a pervasive world of ordinary, non-theoretical experiences in his concept of "being-in-the-world" (In-der-Welt-Sein) (Heidegger:2010:66). He also heavily emphasized the importance of temporality in Dasein, arguing that the awareness of time, particularly one's mortality, served as a crucial structure of Dasein's experience (Heidegger:2010:314). However, the key ontological difference in Dasein's contextual insistence also brought Heidegger to accentuate aspects of subjective experience that Husserl tended to deemphasize. For example, social interactions, "being-with-others" (Mitsein), has an important influence on our understanding of the world, and while Husserl did consider social interactions important, they were often not included in his reductions (Heidegger:2010:121). Heidegger had a particular focus on language as not only a method of communication but as a medium for our interpretation of ourselves and the world around us (Heidegger:2010:157). He also highlighted the significance of objects created by humans, particularly technology, as another, important way to interact with and shape the world (Heidegger:2010:71). Because of Dasein's contextual nature, "being there" implying always being "somewhere", Heidegger would take a specific interest in the human relationship to built space. An example of one of his investigations in this relation can be found in the essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (Bauen Wohnen Denken). The essay serves as a reflection on the interconnectedness between the human capacity to build and the human need to "dwell", to inhabit. At the core of his argument is the idea that "dwelling" is a larger concept than simply living in a space (Heidegger:1971:1). Dwelling, in this sense, becomes the central action on which all building and construction comes from. The very idea of building something is to inhabit the space in which it is constructed (Heidegger:1971:2). Therefore, dwelling is not only done in the house but also is a property of the street, the highway or train station (Heidegger:1971:1).

Dwelling, meaning for Heidegger to stay in place or create meaning in a specific location, is an extension of being (Heidegger:1971:3). Thus, building is an extension of our consciousness, an expression of our relation to the environment around us and a constituent for that environment:

"We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers." (Heidegger:1971:3)

The built environment can therefore not be separated from the idea of man, "the one who dwells" (Heidegger:1971:7), much like the subject can't be separated from the object in Dasein. The action of building is therefore intimately linked to the subjective experience in that it represents a navigation of the physical space and therefore also must condition that navigation (Heidegger:1971:7). What emerges, particularly from investigating Heidegger's essay, is a distinct sense of scale. The scale of a place is not merely a physical dimension but involves an astute relational aspect. Because dwelling is not just about establishing a physical shelter but involves a more profound, existential navigation of the environment around us, our sense of scale must necessarily also relate to this navigation.

In the exhibition "Urban Edge" in 2009, Australian artist John Bodin explored the liminal and fragmented in urban outskirts. Citing phenomenology as his primary inspiration, Bodin was fascinated by how the scales of our cities impact the experience and identity of fringe urban spaces (Fig. 29)

Our relationship to the scale of places around us should consequently be attuned to a scale that relates to human subjective experience. This argument becomes concrete in Heidegger's critique of the relationship to scale that has emerged in an architectural era of technological enthusiasm. He argued that the advent of "power machinery" (Heidegger:1971:9) have created a scale only relating to a reductionist idea of efficiency and functionality which does not acknowledge the holistic, existential aspects of a human sense of scale (Heidegger:1971:9). From both Heidegger's core philosophy of Dasein and his subsequent, focused investigations, strengthening arguments for the idea of a sense of place emerge. The pure ontological premise of "being-in-the-world" further cements the interconnectedness between environment and subject and this connection is expanded to involve social interactions, language and technology. In his essay, particular focus is given to the existential qualities of the built environment. A sense of place becomes, in the light of humans being "dwellers", the sense to inhabit and create meaning within a place. In this way, the human, relational aspects of a given spatial dimension condition our ability to inhabit, making scale crucial for a sense of place. This being a work focusing on the urban condition, cities could be viewed as Heidegger's dwellings, essentially being large, complex cases of humans navigating space. Heidegger's thoughts on the human scale introduce relevant points of discussion for how living in such large man-made spaces affects us, points which I will investigate later.

Husserl and Heidegger's work could be seen as engaging with the totality of the ontology and epistemology that the school of phenomenology proposes. Its foundation lies in core existential concerns and how those shape both the everyday experience and scientific inquiry. However, particular points of investigation arise in these totalities. With Husserl, the experience of time becomes a distinct constituent of the structure of consciousness. In Heidegger's focused investigation, a sense of scale relating to human and relational aspects of life becomes central for a healthy subjective experience of the built environment. It becomes evident through these, that both a sense of time and scale are important components to describing a sense of place. Nevertheless, there is one crucial constituent that I still wish to touch upon. With the origin of this work stemming from the phenomenological experience I have had traversing metropolises around the globe, a principal part of that experience is my own presence in these spaces. It is an embodied experience. For post-Husserl phenomenologists, different trajectories of investigation were formed. Heidegger chose to re-evaluate the totality of

Husserl's arguments, but others went along a different path. A common strategy was to specialize one's efforts within a specific area of investigation. One such phenomenologist was Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) who primarily engaged with how our bodies structure experience, that is to say the embodied, perceptual experience. His primary body of work expressing this investigation is titled "Phenomenology of Perception" (Phénoménologie de la Perception) and continues the core, phenomenological argument of the interconnectedness between body and consciousness. An elemental concept of Merleau-Ponty's work on the embodied, perceptual experience is his "body-schema". The body schema refers to the pre-reflective and tacit knowledge that individuals have of their own bodies (Merleau-Ponty:2012:70). It goes beyond the anatomical structure of the body and encompasses the dynamic, lived understanding of how the body interacts with the surrounding environment (Merleau-Ponty:2012:71). In other words, Merleau-Ponty's errand was illustrating how the body is crucial for the structure of conscious experience:

"Memory or voice are rediscovered when the body again opens to others or to the past, when it allows itself to be shot through by coexistence and when it again signifies (in the active sense) beyond itself" (Merleau-Ponty:2012:168)

Merleau-Ponty argued that even memory, an activity of consciousness usually described within the frame of the mind (Merleau-Ponty:2012:20), is intricately linked to bodily sensations, becoming embodied knowledge. This relationship goes beyond simple motor functions, as the embodied memory, by perceptions of the past, becomes interlinked with our ability to generate meaning (Merleau-Ponty:2012:169). However, while Merleau-Ponty associated the body schema with many of the same constituents of consciousness as we have explored previously, it still contains certain properties that are more present here than in other activities of consciousness. A prominent one highlighted by Merleau-Ponty is the inherent implicitness of embodiment (Merleau-Ponty:2012:247). For example, when reaching for an object, the body helps us effortlessly coordinate our movements without needing to calculate each step consciously. It is an implicit and integral part of perceptual experience. In later chapters of the work, Merleau-Ponty drew on this implicitness of the body schema to discuss the experience of aesthetics, which he considered as an important example of embodied experience. He argued that aesthetic experiences, be it with art (Merleau-Ponty:2012:546), theater (Merleau-Ponty:2012:423) or even nature (Merleau-Ponty:2012:307), encompass

sensory engagement that are crucial for generating aesthetic meaning. For example, in the interaction with an artwork, the viewer engages with the bodily movements of the artist in the viewer's evaluation of the encounter (Merleau-Ponty:2012:326). The difficulty of utilizing intricate strokes of a paintbrush to create a complete image is part of the felt experience of the viewer:

"Moreover, there is a total logic of the painting or the spectacle, an experience of coherence between colors, spatial forms, and the sense of the object" (Merleau-Ponty:2012:326)

This bodily connection to aesthetic encounters described by Merleau-Ponty is reminiscent of a common term within the fields of art and architecture; tactility (Taussig:1991:149). Tactility in its simplest form refers to the sensation of touch but is often used more broadly, particularly in the aforementioned fields, to describe how a given aesthetic encounter is sensorily relatable, meaning that it is pleasant or stimulating to sense (Lauwrens:2019:297).

South African artist Roger Ballen investigated how subconscious experience of space was informed through the body in his exhibition "Outlands". Ballen drew on Merleau-Ponty's concept of implicitness to showcase the underlying psychological connections to our surrounding environment

(Fig. 30)

The implicitness of Merleau-Ponty's body schema could therefore be said to describe a sense of tactility within the subjective experience of space, in that it describes how our embodied experience structures engagement with an aesthetic environment. For my inquiry into a sense of place, Merleau-Ponty's focus on the sensory capacity of the body and how it structures subjective experience deepens the connection between the subject and the built environment. It emphasizes dynamic interaction between the human body and its surroundings. Furthermore, his thoughts on aesthetic experience provides a frame in which to understand the role of the body in such an encounter. A sense of tactility, a relatability to sensory stimulation, structures parts of the creation of knowledge of, attachment to and meaning in a given place.

In this chapter, I aimed to provide a frame in which to understand the ontological importance of the subjective experience of built space. Reflecting on my own phenomenological experience of an ontological disturbance in homogenized built environments, a notion of a concept appeared that could describe this relation between the subject and architectural environments; "a sense of place". The concept's existence became substantiated through Tuan's work, describing an interaction between built space and sensory stimuli, constituting "a sense of place". However, because this inquiry is of an ontological nature, I needed to expand the concept beyond architectural theory. In the discipline of philosophy, questions of what constitutes subjective experience are a central investigation, and as I discovered, the question of how we relate to the material world around us is a subject of tension within the discipline. The school of phenomenology sought to address this tension by arguing for an inherent interconnection between consciousness and the world around it. It therefore provides a suitable frame in which to discuss the relation between the subjective experience and the built environment as well as to find constituents of a sense of place. We see this first in the work of Husserl who argued that conscious activity always is related to something and can for that reason not be separated from its surrounding environment. Husserl also provided a constituent to one's sense of place in his work on time-consciousness, attributing a sense of time as an important structure for conscious experience. Heidegger further cements the connection between subject and environment through his concept of dasein, which stems from a more insistent ontological dimension than Husserl. In his subsequent investigation of the human relationship to the built environment, Heidegger argued for a sense of scale attuned to human and relational aspects, building on the argument that architecture functions as a navigation

and interpretation of space. The built environment is therefore both an extension of our relation to the physical space around us and a causal driver for how we perceive it. Finally, Merleau-Ponty focused on how the body structures conscious experience, creating embodied knowledge and meaning. According to his thoughts on how this affects encounters with aesthetic experiences, a sense of tactility, the ability to bodily sense an environment, emerges. In my investigations of the school of phenomenology, the concept of "sense of place" itself was never mentioned. However, it is quite apparent that the school concerns itself with the exact inquiries that the concept proposes, namely, describing how subjective experience is connected to its surrounding environment. Building on this investigation, I can therefore attribute the sense of place ontological importance. Through both the Lebenswelt and Dasein, the sense of where one is becomes the prime catalyst for one's conscious experience and capacity to create meaning in an environment. A multiplicity of perceptions, encounters and experiences shape this sense. Particularly, I can identify certain constituents of the sense of place, that being a sense of time, scale and tactility. I have now established a conceptualization, background, and overview of my two variables. It is now time to synthesize the findings I've made so far. In the following chapter, I will therefore seek to discuss the ontological effects of architectural homogenization.

CHAPTER 4 _
Urban disturbance – discussing effects of architectural homogenization

Now that I have a conceptualization of the two variables of this work, it is time to address my primary inquiry: the effect that architectural homogenization has on the ontology within the urban citizen. I investigated the history and theoretical framework of global architectural homogenization in the first two chapters. Here it became evident that not only was there a trend for architecture to homogenize, but that it was also doing so within specific power-relations, technologies, and aesthetic expressions. However, from these particularities, a critical question emerges; am I investigating the general ontological effects of architectural homogenization or am I investigating a particular, contemporary condition? This problem is similar to the question posed at the beginning of Chapter 3 where Urban Marxist Theory was highlighted to question whether it is the contemporary condition of homogeneity or general homogeneity itself that is under critique. I would argue that the first two chapters provide a legitimate basis for discussing both. In the historiography of the first chapter, a particular lineage of the contemporary state of architecture emerged. Likewise, the second chapter introduced specific causalities, in the form of ICTs, a capitalist world economy, and western imperialism, to this contemporary homogenizing condition. The particularities of the current architectural homogenization, as well as its specific history, are therefore present to be evaluated. However, what also emerges from these chapters is a theoretical framework in which to investigate the general mechanisms of homogenization. I observe how the creation of homogenous architectural environments, whether in Spanish colonies, Soviet urban planning, or the utopian writings of Le Corbusier, serves to enforce political ideals from strong centers of power. Technology is an ever present dynamic as well, enabling the material as well as social platform for the realization of these projects, represented in the Wagner's enthusiasm and Castells "networking society", respectively. Economic growth and its underlying motives come to shape urban space towards homogeneity, as observed in the urban developments of the United States, East Asia, and Latin America and underscored by Harvey's critique of capitalist urban practice. These dynamics become general mechanisms that can drive architecture to homogenize, and I can therefore discuss the general condition of homogenization through these mechanisms. What hopefully appears is my conviction

that the particular instance of architectural homogeneity witnessed on the contemporary globe and the theoretical, underpinning generalization of a homogenous architectural environment are deeply interlinked. I will therefore engage with both, as I consider them inseparable. In the third chapter I sought to investigate the ontological importance of one's environment through the lens of the concept "sense of place". This led me to the philosophical school of phenomenology where the argument for an inherent interconnection between subjective experience and its surrounding environment provided a frame in which to understand this ontological importance. Furthermore, I identified, through the specific work of prominent phenomenologists, three important constituents for a sense of place; one's sense of time, sense of scale and sense of tactility. The following discussion will be structured after these constituents. Therefore, I would also here like to address some considerations before moving into a discussion. Firstly, a relevant question is why I have chosen to highlight three particular aspects instead of just discussing how architectural homogenization affects the "sense of place" in general. At first, I did attempt to establish such a general conversation, but with time, I found it to be too broad to provide a nuanced and thorough discussion. It seemed that "sense of place" simply encompassed too much, causing a loss of focus. These efforts led to me to investigate if I could find specific aspects of "sense of place" in the works of the phenomenologists. I concluded that by finding particular constituents, I could more effectively examine the broader "sense of place" and the effects architectural homogenization has on it. By separating the concept into parts of a whole, I could inspect them in more detail and hopefully add nuance to the overall concept. This beckons another question; why did I choose these three aspects? In both the works of Husserl (Husserl:2001:167) and Heidegger (Heidegger:2010:66), a multiplicity of experiences, encounters, and sensations constitute the connection between the subject and its surrounding environment. They both, for example, highlight the importance of social interactions. Why have I not chosen a "sense of social interactions"? Phenomenological work also prominently focuses on identity and the creation of meaning within the self in response to one's environment (Husserl, 2001:250). Why no "sense of identity"? The common denominator among these excluded aspects is that they engage with complex social and cultural processes. While phenomenology could, in its holistic embrace of the subjective experience, provide explanations as to how architectural homogenization affects social relations, the school contains certain shortcomings by virtue of its interpretative nature, which could be considered problematic in research on social and cultural structures (for more on this argument, see

Discussion, p. 86). Conversely, the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology and, of course, urban studies encompass the broader dynamics of power-relations, institutional structures and macro-level influences that are required to successfully encapsulate the relationship between social relations and architecture. The work of Douglas Spencer (Spencer:2016:44) as well as of Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten (Avermeate et. al.:2010:55), that I explored in the first chapter, represents such encompassing investigations into how social relations are affected by architectural homogenization. However, this work's inquiry primarily focuses on an individual's ontological experience, not on aspects of social relations. Hence, I chose to focus on intro-perspective aspects of consciousness, as they aligned more fittingly with the goals of this work. It is in the descriptions and analysis of these intro-perspective aspects of subjective experience that phenomenology demonstrates its aptitudes (Randles:2012:11). By going into intense detail in the conscious experience, phenomenology describes aspects of our subjective experience touched upon rarely in other fields (Randles:2012:12). Another reason why I think these particular aspects attracted my attention was because of their prolific presence in architectural theory. The passing of time and how this affects materials, utilization, and context in a given architectural product is always a consideration in any architectural work (Pallasmaa:2000:80). Scale is likewise a fundamental concept in architecture, describing the physical dimension of and relation between architectural elements (Lynch:1964:8). Finally, tactility is used abundantly in architecture to describe the capacity of both materials and final products to instantiate sensory attachments and experiences (Lee:2002:3). This connection invites me to include architectural theorists in this discussion. While I was hesitant to substantiate my conceptual framework in a field that does not employ the same evaluation criteria as social scientific or philosophical disciplines, architectural theory will be suitable here to provide supporting arguments.

In investigation of the work of Husserl, a primary constituent of conscious activity emerged; the temporal consciousness. One's sense of time passing becomes, in the light of Husserl's argument, a dynamic entity which assumes an active role (Husserl:2001:249). The interplay between past experiences, a lived-in present and an assuming future constantly re-asserts our existence. In this way, our sense of time turns into a marker of authenticity, an estimation of reality (Husserl:2001:249). Because our sense of time is dynamic, it is subject to change. It therefore becomes necessary to rely on external phenomena to establish a coherent sense of time. The steady rise and fall of the sun in the sky marks a day emerging and passing. Green sprouts on vegeta-

tion and the humming of insects mark the end of another winter. In the modern day, devices notify us of the exact present moment in time. What can be derived by this is that our sense of time is related to our surrounding environment (Husserl:2001:250). Thus, our sense of time passing becomes a way to estimate metaphysical certainty (Husserl:2001:250). It can therefore be argued, that if our sense of time is disrupted by our surrounding environment, an ontological dissonance can occur. In Chapter 2, it was discussed how both the invention of ICTs and the logic of profit accumulation in a capitalist world economy have shifted the pace in architectural practice. ICTs create a platform for an unprecedented exchange of information, allowing a level of mobility for architectural firms and cultures not seen before. The logic of capitalism incentivizes maximization of efficiency, pushing for urban development solutions that require less and less time to market and construct. These factors contribute to the capacity of the aesthetic makeup of the urban environment to change rapidly.

Shanghai in 1990 and 2010 (Fig. 31)

New structures can replace old ones at an exceedingly accelerated rate. Hence, it could be argued that this swift transformation of landscapes and skylines creates a disorienting experience. For example, if the neighborhood that one has lived in for an entire life changes its form and aesthetic in the matter of a few years, one could imagine a

disruption of the coherent relationship between past, present and future that Husserl described as a necessary structure for consciousness. The accelerated change could therefore disrupt urban citizens' sense of continuity and permanence, contributing to a feeling of temporal dislocation. This temporal dislocation could also be argued to be further accentuated by the materials employed in much of contemporary architecture. The advent of industrial construction materials such as re-enforced concrete, aluminum, steel and glass made it possible to build at a substantially faster speed, as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2. It is therefore not surprising that much contemporary construction utilizes these materials (Kamal:2020:98). However, within these materials lies a shared problem; they incentivize frequent maintenance or, in worst cases, rapid replacement (Glasser et. al.:2008:226) (Sinha et. al.:2021:2) (Morcillo et. al.:2002:329). These materials are marred by a short lifecycle, creating a need for rapid turnover in modern construction. Buildings made out of these materials will therefore always appear "new", if they are kept to the standards required by their materials. This leaves them without temporal markers, eroding the ability to tell the age of the architectural product. The lack of enduring characteristics in the materials of contemporary construction could therefore also be said to disrupt one's sense of time. Looking back at what I identified as a primary inspiration for the aesthetic expressions of contemporary architecture, perhaps this disruption of the sense of time is somewhat intentional. As discussed, architectural Modernism sought to create the ultimate solutions to urban dilemmas, thereby situating itself as the end of architectural history (Corbusier:1986:279). This entailed for modernists the total exclusion of ornamentation and traditional stylistic markers, that would usually tell the story of the specific period in which the product was constructed (Wagner:1988:68). The inclusion of cutting-edge industrial materials, such as glass, aluminum and re-enforced concrete, would signify the progressive intentions behind their work but it would also further aid their desire to create architecture that did not fit in a traditional sense of time. Looking at contemporary architectural practice, this could be argued to be part of the legacy of Modernism. The question then becomes if it is a healthy perspective to strive for ending the history of architecture, to make time stand still. If one were to accept Husserl's explication of temporal consciousness as a valid premise, then our sense of time's dynamic nature must be supported by reliable external encounters to maintain consistency. If one is surrounded by architecture that eludes such a consistency, by nature of its speedy construction, choice of materials and underlying ideology, then it could be argued that architecture without temporal markers would disrupt our way to

consistently estimate time. This point resonates with the work of renowned architect Juhani Pallasmaa (1936-) who engages theoretically with the question of how modern architecture affects our senses. In the article "Hapticity and Time", Pallasmaa argues that modern architecture seeks to separate us from our relationship to time:

"As a consequence of its formal ideals, the architecture of our time is usually creating settings for the eye which seem to originate in a single moment of time and evoke the experience of flattened temporality. Vision places us in the present tense, whereas haptic experience evokes the experience of a temporal continuum. The inevitable processes of ageing, weathering and wear are not usually considered as conscious and positive elements in design; the architectural artefact exists in a timeless space, an artificial condition separated from the reality of time. The architecture of the modern era aspires to evoke an air of ageless youth and of a perpetual present. The ideals of perfection and completeness further detach the architectural object from the reality of time and the traces of use. Consequently, our buildings have become vulnerable to the effect of time, the revenge of time. Instead of offering positive qualities of vintage and authority, time and use attack our buildings destructively." (Pallasmaa:2000:80)

Brazil's National Museum and Brasilia's Cathedral, designed by famous modernist Oscar Niemeyer. Both landmarks are today plagued by rain marks and cracking facades
(Fig. 32)

By rejecting the natural temporal markers such as weathering, Pallasmaa argues that modern architecture abstracts the relationship between urban citizens and the passage of time. When these temporal markers inevitably leave their mark, the structures at the end of history sees themselves degraded instead of authenticated. It seems that even if one wished to create an architectural product as the end of history, it would inevitably have to face the passing of time. However, in the critique of how the contemporary condition of global architectural homogenization disrupts the sense of time, lies a paradox. Regardless of the causalities, there is no doubt that we are living in an "age of urbanization" (Scheuer et. al.:2016:1). According to the UN, 57 % of the world's population now lives in cities, a number expected to grow to 60 % by 2030 (Destatis:2024). The world is urbanizing at a rapid pace and have been doing so for decades (Destatis:2024). The pressure on urban contexts to accommodate new citizens is therefore immense, incentivizing practices that speeds the pace of urban development. Hence, the hastily growing demand of urban environments would come at tension with ensuring a healthy sense of time. Another paradox within this dilemma is the necessity to create entirely new urban environments. How can one establish a sense of time in an urban environment with no previous context? These paradoxes illustrate, that establishing a coherent sense of time within an urban environment is not ubiquitously effective and can be at odds with functional needs.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a dynamic of globalizing forces such as ICTs, a capitalist world economy and a legacy of western imperialism that can lead to homogenizing architectural practices, is their compression of time. However, it is not only time that have been compressed but also space itself. Advances in transportation technologies as well as the emergence of virtual spaces have massively increased connectivity between otherwise unconnected environments. The underlying logic of profit accumulation have incentivized optimization of supply chains as well as an effort to homogenize markets, leading to a compression of the spatial aspects of production and trade. Having an almost omnipresent cultural and political influence emanate from one particular region, the western hemisphere, have led to a dissemination of a particular way of life and political conduct which gives the perception of a world shrinking. Our relationship to space is therefore changing under these circumstances. Through the philosophy of Heidegger, an inherent, ontological relationship to space emerged. This became apparent first in his key-concept of Dasein, "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger:2010:11). By

the very notion that existence is always situated, space both shapes and is shaped by conscious experience. There is therefore a certain "scale" about Dasein, a relational aspect between the elements of its surrounding space and the self in which reality is instantiated (Heidegger:2010:12). Our ability to navigate the dimensions around us therefore becomes constituting for conscious experience. In a crowded street under pouring rain, an interim roof of umbrellas and hastily moving bodies provide a source of shelter but also requires shift negotiation. In the final steps of a grueling ascent, one is rewarded with a stunning feeling of insignificance at the top of the mountain. After months of persistent search, the final centerpiece of the living room is now installed, bringing the whole space together and becoming a home. In these examples of different, proto-typical experiences, it becomes apparent that our relationship to the scale of our environments shapes our connection with and understanding of that environment (Heidegger:1971:7). Because of this relation, our capacity to build environments ourselves becomes particularly pertinent. Heidegger therefore sought to investigate this relation between human existence and the built environment in the essay, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking". He contends that dwelling is not merely a physical act of inhabiting a space but involves an existential engagement with the world (Heidegger:1971:1). Through dwelling, Dasein establishes a meaningful relationship with its surroundings, becoming a way to navigate space itself (Heidegger:1971:2). Scale emerges as a crucial aspect of this existential relationship. Heidegger suggests that the built environment should reflect the scale of human existence as it otherwise would cause ontological disassociation (Heidegger:1971:9).

Towering structures engulfs the streets of the newly built financial district Zuidas, Amsterdam in shadows (Fig. 33)

Seen from this perspective, it could be argued that the increasing homogenization of urban environments over the globe, as well as the particular ways this homogenization is practiced, does not comply with Heidegger's human scale. In relation to general homogenization, if the urban form is indistinctive, buildings, even entire neighborhoods, will aesthetically blend into each other. This lack of articulation could be argued to hinder one's ability to assert the dimensions of the given urban environment. This could have multiple consequences. An immediate one would be an increased difficulty in navigating the urban space. A homogenized expression and form will leave little distinctive markers to aid in estimating one's location. Beyond the simple yet distressing problem of getting lost, this could also result in a lack of attachment to the places of the city. The alternating dimensions of the city, both in its specific buildings as well as the distinctions and distances between neighborhood, create the particular places that comprise it. In a homogenized urban environment, all buildings will appear equally significant, all boroughs will garner equivalent relevance. It would represent a near total absence of scale, with its dimensions being only relevant to the totality of the city, not the places it is comprised of. The erosion of distinctive dimensions, the compression of space, becomes increasingly problematic in the contemporary world where not only neighborhoods within a city homogenize but even cities themselves. As discussed, urban environments all over the globe are forming towards increasingly similar aesthetic make-ups. The difficulty of asserting where one is within in the city could therefore grow to become a difficulty in assessing where one is on the globe. With this being said, one could also imagine that the elimination of differentiating dimensions could serve positive purposes. A key characteristic of Le Corbusier's "Radiant City" would be its symmetrical organization and complete undifferentiation of aesthetic profiles (Fishman:2021:6). This was intended to ensure that no place would hold particular importance over any other, which would guarantee a democratic distribution of amenities and associations (Montavon et. al.:2006:2). The "scalelessness" of modernist urban planning was therefore intentional, as they thought it would enhance equality in urban life. In theory, a homogenization of the dimensions of the urban environment would, by creating similar environments for its inhabitants, manifest equivalent access and surroundings. However, this argument echoes the tendency of modernists to treat urban planning as a "machine" (Corbusier:1986:279). For Heidegger, the attempt to homogenize the dimensions of our urban spaces would be an entirely misguided endeavor:

"The next step on this path would be the question: what is the state of dwelling in our precarious age? On all sides we hear talk about the housing shortage, and with good reason. Nor is there just talk; there is action too. We try to fill the need by providing houses, by promoting the building of houses, planning the whole architectural enterprise. However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the real plight of dwelling does not lie merely in a lack of houses. The real plight of dwelling is indeed older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase of the earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers. The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell" (Heidegger:1971:10)

While a homogenization of dimensions within an urban environment may be of a democratic intention, Heidegger argued that it would dilute the urban experience. The modernist emphasis on efficiency, standardization, and uniformity in urban planning prioritizes functional utility over human experience, reducing individuals to mere objects within a mechanistic system (Heidegger:1971:9). Human existence, Dasein, cannot simply be reduced to "lacking a house" (Heidegger:1971:10).

New Cairo – a new administrative capital for Egypt (Fig. 34)

Instead, the real pursuit, for Heidegger, lies in focusing on the nature of "dwelling" (Heidegger:1971:10). if we are to consider the built environment as a way to navigate space, then the dimensions of our built environments should relate to that navigation:

"But how else can mortals answer this summons than by trying on their part, on their own, to bring dwelling to the fullness of its nature? This they accomplish when they build out of dwelling, and think for the sake of dwelling" (Heidegger:1971:9)

Building something out of "dwelling" would therefore encompass the plethora of experiences within Dasein which makes the human scale inherently heterogenous. Hence, it would be unwise to build in in a homogenized scale. Instead, one should attempt to create environments that allow for urban citizens to establish their own sense of belonging, meaning and navigation. The scale of such an environment would necessarily, by virtue of the different constituents of Dasein, be heterogenous. Looking at the contemporary state of architecture illustrated in Chapter 2, it would also be difficult to argue that a homogenization of scale serves democratizing purposes. On the contrary, standardizing the dimensions of urban space enhances the effectivity of capitalist urban development (Harvey:2015:324). Its aesthetic form is not universal but rather an expression of a particular, dominating way of western life (Tonlinson:1991:141). As mentioned, scale is an integral concept in architecture. It is therefore not surprising that several reactions to the increasing homogenization of scale have emerged within the field. One of the most influential comes from architectural theorist Christopher Alexander (1936-2022), who's work one could argue is entirely about our relationship to scale (Jiang:2019:2). Much like Heidegger, Alexander had grown weary of the relationship to scale in the architecture of his time (Alexander et. al.:1977:xvi). He argued that that the scale in this architecture, the relation between dimensions, had prioritized grandiose architectural gestures and abstract design concepts over the needs and lived experience of urban citizens (Alexander et. al.:1977:xvi). This critique can be found in one of his major works, "A Pattern Language". In the work, Alexander described the relational aspect between the dimensions in urban space as a "pattern language", meaning that certain dimensions permeate in certain ways of design and urban planning. One dimension will necessarily relate to all others within a given architectural product (Alexander et. al.:1977:xiii). For Alexander, contemporary architecture had failed in making this "language" translatable:

"We believe… that the languages which people have today are so brutal, and so fragmented, that most people no longer have any language to speak of at all---and what they do have is not based on human, or natural considerations" (Alexander et. al.:1977:xvi)

The "pattern language" of contemporary architecture does not provide agency and a relational scale for those who inhabit it. "A Pattern Language" is therefore ultimately an attempt to remedy this lack of an intuitive design language in urban development. It does this by basing its foundation on a similar idea to Heidegger's "human scale":

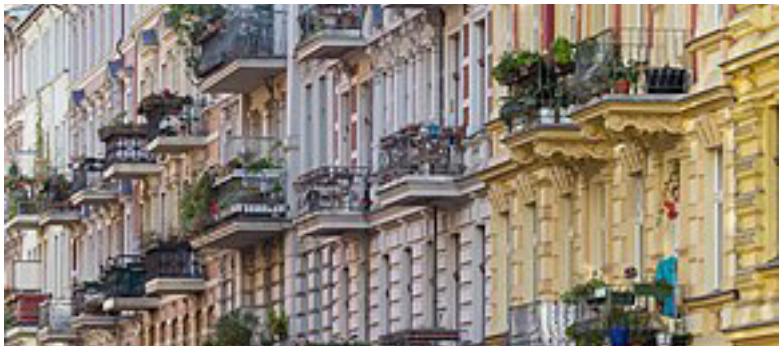
"It is shown there, that towns and buildings will not be able to come alive, unless they are made by all the people in society, and unless these people share a common pattern language, within which to make these buildings, and unless this common pattern language is alive itself" (Alexander et. al.:1977:x)

A basis for his pattern language is an inherent idea of human agency and interaction. Akin to Heidegger's plea for "mortals to build out of dwelling" (Heidegger:1971:9), Alexander aimed to create a urban design pattern which had its base in the individual's relation to their environment (Alexander.et.al.:1977:xvi). In that way the scale would be dynamic and, consequently, heterogenous. However, substantiating a sense of scale in human and individual dimensions also creates a paradox. I mentioned in Chapter 3 how cities could be seen as large and complex cases of Heidegger's "dwelling". If one is to argue that healthy urban planning and architecture is made in a "human" scale, does cities' implicit size and complexity not contradict this notion? Furthermore, one could argue that the attractiveness of cities is found in their capacity to provide a plethora of specialized opportunities, encounters and amenities. Would this capacity exist to the same degree if everyone where to engage with their own individual sense of scale, as proposed by both Alexander (Alexander et. al.:1977:x) and Heidegger (Heidegger:1971:9)? While a completely top-down, homogenized approach is certainly problematic, the human sense of scale does also come at tension with some inherent qualities of cities.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the problem that the philosophical stance of a duality between the mind and the body creates in a discussion about our relationship to space. Having now engaged with how a sense of time and a sense of scale could be negatively impacted by architectural homogenization, I would like to refer back to this discussion. This is because that, in a vacuum, our ideas of scale and time could be argued to be abstract concepts only residing within the mind (Descartes:1984:17), meaning that they are only considered an interpretation of the outside world. However, it becomes apparent that both a sense of scale and a sense of time are experiences linked to the

body. For instance, our experience of temporal duration and progression is shaped by bodily rhythms, such as heartbeat, breathing, and sleep-wake cycles, which provide tangible markers of time passing. These bodily sensations ground our subjective experience of time in physical reality. When we perceive the scale of a space, such as a room or building, our sensory experiences are mediated through our bodily sensations and movements. The mind's perception of scale is therefore informed by the body's physical interactions with architectural elements, such as doorways, ceilings, and furniture. A sense of scale and time are therefore necessarily also "embodied experiences" (Merleau-Ponty:2012:70). As I discovered through the work of Merleau-Ponty, the body and its sensations are crucial in structuring the experience of space (Merleau-Ponty:2012:169). Cognitive functions such as the ability to memorize and to generate meaning become linked to implicit actions and sensations (Merleau-Ponty:2012:169). Merleau-Ponty therefore attributed particular importance to aesthetic encounters, in which a tactile relationship emerged. The relatability of the perceptual sensations in such encounters becomes a crucial constituent of the experience (Merleau-Ponty:2012:326). Resting in the soft grass of a public park provides a natural refuge from urban sprawl. Uneven cobblestones force organic steps in an old city center. The earth rumbles as an underground train passes underneath your feet. Our sense of tactility brings embodied meaning to these everyday experiences. It could therefore be argued that a reduced sense of tactility would diminish the relation to our surrounding urban environment. So, how could the homogenization of architectural urban practice be said to decrease tactility? I previously discussed how the materials utilized in contemporary architecture have homogenized as a consequence of the efficacy of industrial production as well as under the pressure to construct hastily and efficiently. I already mentioned the effects that these materials could have on our sense of time, but they also could be argued to entail a plethora of disturbances to our sense of tactility. A simple one to address first would be the general loss of material diversity. Coming from a largely local production of materials to having certain materials prevail in industrial production creates urban architecture which offers repetitive tactile encounters. Tactile richness is therefore diminished simply by the decreasing pool of utilized materials. Furthermore, the specific materials that are then utilized, such as glass or aluminum, tend to provide smooth and sleek surfaces. Such surfaces provide little sensory engagement compared to more complex and dynamic facades, for example in buildings made of wood or bricks. Through the thoughts of Merleau-Ponty, it could subsequently be argued that both the general loss of material diversity as well the

specific materials utilized in contemporary architecture obscures the tactile relationship that he described between subject and a given aesthetic encounter (Merleau-Ponty:2012:326). Therefore, both a general architectural homogenization (featuring few and repetitive materials) and the specific state of contemporary global urban architecture (using industrial, smooth materials) are diminishing tactility. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty, in his description of an encounter with a painting, alluded to an embodied relationship between the viewer and the artist (Merleau-Ponty:2012:326). We can view the relationship between urban citizen and the architect or urban planner in a similar conduct, in that the materiality of a building or infrastructure communicates a certain story, akin to the bodily motions witnessed in brush strokes (Merleau-Ponty:2012:326).



Two modes of housing in the German capital of Berlin – early 20th century brick houses in Bergmannkiez and newly built aluminum and glass houses in the suburb of Adlershof (Fig. 35, Fig. 36)

Tactility, in this way, is therefore not only about sensing the architectural product but also sensing the intention and history of its creator. In an era of industrial materials and prefabricated construction techniques, this story is obscured, as one is completely alienated from the construction process. As a result, buildings and infrastructure may lack the unique character and handcrafted details that conveys a sense of human connection. This is perhaps aided by the prevalence of the digital design programs

discussed in Chapter 2. While the inclusion of these into architectural practice does not necessarily exclude physical prototyping, heavily relying on computer generation could be argued to shift the focus from tactile exploration to the purely visual aspects of the design. Digital programs therefore could lead to a disconnect between architects and the sensory experiences of urban citizens. The impact of both industrial and digital technology on the tactile focus of urban architecture has become an increasing subject of concern within architectural theory. One of the most prominent to voice this concern is architectural theorist and philosopher Elisabeth Grosz (1952-). At the turn of the century, she formatted a series of essays on the subject into the collection "Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space". In the work, Grosz builds on an intersectional framework between phenomenology and feminist theory to argue why architecture is more than just a visual art form (Grosz:2001:xviii). She argues that a fetishization of technology within architectural practice have removed it from its embodied roots (Grosz:2001:42). Urban architecture have become, she argues, a primarily visual exercise, similar to a medium presented on a screen (Grosz:2001:xviii). This tendency ignores the inherent embodied quality of cities:

"The corporeality, or materiality, of the city is the same order of complexity as that of bodies" (Grosz:2001:49)

Grosz argues, that despite the progression of digital technologies that allows for practices without physical engagement, human existence is still intimately linked to its body (Grosz:2001:49). The city is therefore ultimately still experienced bodily, and its structure, form and aesthetic should therefore be informed after that notion:

"The mode of futurity, that is, of becoming, is a condition of bodily existence… it is also the life and existence of the city" (Grosz:2001:52)

From the work of Merleau-Ponty and Grosz, a foregrounding of the tactile dimension of urban space appears. Consequently, this foregrounding could be seen as an argument for heterogeneity in cities' form and aesthetic expression. Emphasizing the need for a richness in tactile encounters would necessarily entail a variety of both materials as well as forms of production. However, this ambition could also be argued to be at odds with the current, pragmatic realities of urban development. The arguments made earlier about the current pressure that cities over the globe faces also goes here.

A tactile enrichening could be argued to simply be too cost- and time inefficient to accommodate the development required in our urbanizing times. Furthermore, tactile complexity also burdens the maintenance agents of the city, requiring specialized resources and knowledge to maintain.

In this chapter I sought to synthesize the findings of previous chapters to provide an answer as to what effects does architectural homogenization have on our sense of place. To discuss this, I chose to define three important constituents of a "sense of place"; a sense of time, a sense of scale, and a sense of tactility. Through Husserl's temporal consciousness, I discussed how the dynamic nature of our ability to sense time could be disrupted by the swift pace of contemporary, global architectural practice as well as how the materials it utilizes, in part influenced by Modernism, could diminish the sense of time in their lack of temporal markers. In my investigation on the sense of scale, it emerged how Heidegger's "human scale" illustrated inherent weaknesses of homogenized urban dimensions, in that such environments would erase the distinctive, relatable scales required to form a connection to places. By emphasizing the embodied nature of conscious experience, the work of Merleau-Ponty points to a problem in homogenous urban architecture's absence of tactile richness, as it decreases the sensory engagement needed to establish a relation not only between the urban citizen and the urban architectural product but also its creator. It also became apparent through the work of Pallasmaa, Alexander, and Grosz, that these disturbances are a concern shared with the field of architectural theory. From the specific investigations into the sense of time, scale, and tactility, similar effects of architectural homogenization appear. The disorienting effects of homogenized urban environments were shown both in discussing the sense of time and scale. It seems that architectural homogenization could lead to difficulty in orientation and familiarization. The diminished ability to form a connection with, or in other words, to create meaning in urban space was also highlighted in all three constituents. Architecturally homogenized urban environments, whether by having no temporal markers, erasing distinctive dimensions, or offering repetitive tactile encounters, appear to disturb the relationships between subject and city that generate meaningful connections. As previously discussed, the subjective experience of urban environments, "a sense of place", encompasses many more aspects than a sense of time, scale and tactility. However, if similar effects emerge from investigating these particular constituents, it alludes to a generalization of the ontological effects architectural homogenization has on the overall subjective experience of

urban space, that being disorientation and a loss of meaning and connection. In spite of these ontological disturbances, I also discussed certain paradoxes that could hinder the eventual remedy of these effects. The pressure to develop that contemporary urban environments faces, as well as some inherent aspects of cities seem to be at tension with what I have described as a healthy "sense of place". While I certainly think that the pragmatic need for urban development as well as the engrossing, complex nature of the city needs to be taken into account, the standards supposed by my discussion of these constituents of "sense of place" should be taken into account as well. Albeit that there is a present need for hastily development, the experience of these urban developments involves more than what is offered by the urban architecture I so far have described. To ignore the heterogenous, complex experiences such as the sense of time, scale, and tactility would be reducing urban citizens, in the words of Heidegger, to simply be "lacking houses" (Heidegger:1971:10). In fact, neglecting these factors could lead to a detriment in the eventual success of such urban development, a point which will be made much clearer in the following chapter. In the last chapter of this work, I seek to step out of the theoretical realm of the last couple of chapters and test my findings on contemporary urban developments across the globe. By particularizing what so far has been generalizations, I hope to support the points made in this chapter by providing examples in which I find these dynamics to occur.

CHAPTER 5 _
Concrete cases – testing my findings

With the exception of particular investigations of the history of architectural homogenization conducted in Chapter 1, this work has so far been a theoretical endeavor. This being a conceptual study, seeking to argue for, through diverging theories, a connection between the phenomenon of architectural homogenization and our connection to the built environment, "a sense of place", the theoretical approach has been fitting according to the goals of this work. However, with that being said, this work revolves around a tangible subject matter, that being the aesthetic and form of urban environments. In the previous chapter, I discussed through a synthesis of my conceptualizations of architectural homogenization and "a sense of place", the ontological effects that architectural homogenization could have on the urban citizen. If the work were to end there, this discussion would remain theoretical. Hence, because of the inherent tangibility of the subject matter, I thought it appropriate to discuss my findings in relation to particular cases of contemporary urban development in which I find the dynamics discussed in the previous chapter to be present. The last chapter of this work will therefore delve into three, distinct examples of contemporary urban development and how they could illustrate the relationship between architectural homogenization and urban citizen that causes an ontological disturbance. For my selection of these, I established some crucial criteria. Firstly, they had to be contemporary. By "contemporary", I mean development projects that were commenced earliest 30 years ago. While the pace of urban development and urban architectural practice is certainly moving faster and faster, considering the momentous task planning, administrating and constructing urban developments of this scale, some decades can be argued to belong to the same architectural era. Secondly, I desired to illustrate different modes of urban development. If the general mechanisms, that I described in the previous chapter, apply to urban developments with differentiating premises, it would substantiate the applicability of my arguments. I therefore chose three urban developments with these differing premises: an extension of an urban environment with no pre-existing, local urban context, an extension of an urban environment with a pre-existing, local context and an entirely new urban environment. Thirdly, they had to be geographically and culturally dispersed from each other. As I argue for a "global" architectural prac-

tice homogenizing, it is pertinent to illustrate the extend of stratification of this type of urban architecture. From these criteria, the following urban developments have been selected: housing and business development Ørestad in Copenhagen, Denmark, the seaside neighborhood of Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires, Argentina and the Forest City in Malaysia. I would have liked to include more regions than represented here, but I must conclude that it is out of the scope of this work. Hopefully, the geographical and cultural dispersion of these developments as well as their differing purposes will, to a degree, illustrate the global presence of this type of urban architectural practice.

An extension of an urban environment with no pre-existing, local urban context
Ørestad, Copenhagen, Denmark

Aerial view of the Ørestad neighborhood (Fig. 37)

Throughout the 1990's, Copenhagen experienced a serious debt crisis (Adminis:2023:3). Its tax earnings were massively dwindling as a result of its wealthiest inhabitants relocating to suburbs (Knowles:2012:254). This crisis critically changed the direction of urban planning of the Danish capital. Since the 1950's, Copenhagen city planning had largely been conducted in accordance with the social-democratic values of the danish welfare state (Adminis:2023:3). However, being in this economic predicament, the intention behind the spatial organization of the city took a decisive

neo-liberal turn (Knowles:2012:254). Urban development became a strategy to incentivize capital investment in Copenhagen, and so, several development projects were proposed in the 1990's in compliance with this new strategy. One of those projects was an entirely new residential and business neighborhood, named "Ørestad". Its location would be on the southside of the Amager island, an area completely devoid of urban development but with a close proximity to the city center. In one regard, it carried on the Danish urban planning tradition. That being in the form of its reliance on the metro system to provide connection to the rest of the city, which reminds one of the famed Copenhagen "finger-plan" neighborhoods built alongside the S-train system (Knowles:2012:252). In essence, the entirety of Ørestad is clustered around this metro line. However, that is where the similarities end. The first departure came in the form of it being largely privately funded, with funding being facilitated by the Ørestad Development Corporation (Adminis:2023:2). While the company itself was publicly owned and did own the metro-line itself, it was tasked with acquiring private funding for the construction of the remaining urban infrastructure. This introduced several private agents which were beforehand uncommon in Danish urban developments of this scale. The second departure can be found in its spatial organization. While there was an intention to maintain Danish traditions of healthy urban infrastructure, an example being pedestrian accessibility, these were quickly abandoned under pressure of Ørestad's private investors (Adminis:2023:4). With a development plan of 20-30 years, Ørestad saw its first building erected in 2001, and while new buildings and amenities still continue to appear to this day, the spatial identity of the neighborhood have remained largely the same. This spatial identity can be described as large blocks, made in glass, steel, and aluminum, of either apartments or office buildings all surrounding the main avenue hosting the metro line. To procure daily supplies and amenities, residents are required to enter the enormous, defining shopping mall, "Fields", as Ørestad's buildings otherwise contain little room for local shops (Adminis:2023:4). While Ørestad can host about 30.000 residents, its population was severely low for the first 15 years of its existence, reaching only 100 residents in the first 3 years after its inauguration and 6744 in 2011, 10 years after inauguration (By&Havn:2024). In light of this, Ørestad is largely considered a failure amongst the Danish public (Dahl:2019). Putting Ørestad into the perspective of the discussion of the previous chapter, perhaps I can provide some answers as to why the neighborhood did not meet expectations. With being an entirely new neighborhood with no pre-existing urban context, it could be argued that establishing a sense of time is difficult.

New developments such as Ørestad will therefore always be marred by "inauthenticity" (Husserl:2001:250), in that they lack any history on which to form an urban identity. However, other temporal markers are present in such developments. With being built in an entirely empty area, Ørestad is still surrounded by large nature reserves, which, with the passing of the seasons, could give a sense of temporality to the neighborhood. Likewise, the constructions in the neighborhood could have utilized materials that served as temporal markers. Neither has turned out to be the case. With most of the activity in the neighborhood taking place in the main artery of its central boulevard, the bustle is far removed from the surrounding nature, and Ørestad's green recreational areas mostly consists of large patches of evergreen grass with little taller vegetation. As mentioned, the material composition of the towering blocks of Ørestad is of glass, aluminum and concrete, leaving little opportunity for a sense of time passing. These towering blocks also cause problems for the sense of scale. While it is certainly cheaper and less time-consuming to emphasize larger blocks instead of many, smaller constructions, a fact that the private investors of Ørestad embraced (Knowles:2012:257), the towering nature of such buildings could be argued to be intimidating, especially when they are the primary type of construction.

Almost empty fields of grass are the recreational options offered between Ørestad's towering housing structures (Fig. 38)

Simply put, their size removes them further from a human scale (Heidegger:1971:9). The spatial organization of the neighborhood is likewise at odds with a healthy sense

of scale. Having most of the relevant activity and construction around one long boulevard creates a sense of endlessness as one traverses the neighborhood. The lack of differing dimensions within the recreational infrastructure as well as in the buildings surrounding the boulevard also adds to the "scalelessness" of Ørestad's linear layout. Considering the average danish weather, the spatial organization of the neighborhood also causes some uncomfortable tactile encounters. With its proximity to the sea and the danish weather being largely windy, rainy and grey for most of the year, the vast space between buildings as well as the never-ending boulevard provide a rather harsh and windswept traversing experience, adding to the feeling of intimidation. The neighborhood does therefore not illustrate a sense of tactility in tune with its natural circumstances (Merleau-Ponty:2012:307). The materiality of its constructions and infrastructure does not leave much room for enrichening tactile encounters either, in their shallow material diversity. Overall, it becomes clear that the development of Ørestad did not take these matters into regard. Instead, its private investors placed their bets on the functional capabilities, being the ability to provide vast amounts of housing in a short time that was closely connected to the inner city by the metro-line (Adminis:2023:4). As a finishing remark about Ørestad, I would like to refer to the words of cultural analyst, Ditte Giese (1977-), who, in an article for the digital magazine Heartbeats, quite aptly summarizes my critique of the Copenhagen neighborhood:

"Ørestaden er stadig, så mange år efter de første spadestik i start-nullerne, helt og aldeles charmeforladt. Det er et sted, som kun nyskilte og desperate boligsøgende flytter til. Glas og stål, kedelige kontorbygninger og den evigt forblæste hovedpulsåre Ørestads Boulevard, som et mareridtsbyggeri, der aldrig slutter og en drøm om et nyt københavnerkvarter, som må siges at være mislykket. Var jeg krimiforfatter, ville jeg henlægge alle mine mord til den grå Ørestad."

["Ørestaden is still, so many years after turning the first sods at the start of the century, completely and utterly bereft of charm. It is a place that only newly divorced and desperate house seekers move to. Glass and steel, boring office buildings and the eternally windswept main artery Ørestad's Boulevard is like a nightmare construction that never ends. A dream of a new Copenhagen district, which must be said to have failed. If I were a crime novelist, I would attribute all my murders to the gray Ørestad."] (Giese:2022)

An extension of an urban environment with a pre-existing, local urban context
Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires, Argentina

With its location firmly sat in the bay of the Rio de la Plata river, the capital of Argentina's cultural and economic development is intimately linked with its trading activities. The constant arrival and departure of goods, people and services have created an urban identity based on immigration, cultural exchange and progressive influx. This attributes the ports of Buenos Aires particular importance. They function not only as zones of economic interest but also as symbolic monuments to the Argentinian values of both international affluence and national determination (Sherman:2012:33). One such historic port can be found on the eastern seafront of the city. Named after its initial investor, "Puerto Madero" was completed in 1897 with the intention to support the increasingly overburdened southern port of La Boca (Meneses et. al.:2019:163).

The port area of Puerto Madero, strung along its canal (Fig. 39)

Equipped with state-of-the-art port infrastructure, Puerto Madero became a central trading platform as well as a symbol of progress in the early 20th century (Sherman:2012:31). However, activity at the port soon came to a decline as competition coming from both Buenos Aires' other ports of La Boca and the northern Puerto Nuevo as well as the neighboring port-cities of La Plata and Montevideo illustrated the port's increasing difficulty in accommodating swiftly changing shipping technologies (Sherman:2012:32). For many years, Puerto Madero was only utilized as informal residence by poor port workers and as a refuge for sexual and political minorities (Meneses.et.al.:2019:164). Its isolation was particularly felt during the military dicta-

torship in the mid 20th century, where the area was essentially locked away from the rest of the city (Sherman:2012:44). When the port re-opened post-dictatorship, it was a desolate place. The newly formed democratic government saw potential in Puerto Madero as a means to inspire a sense of recovered democracy through the port's symbolic history (Sherman:2012:44), and so, plans to revitalize the area began. In similar fashion to Ørestad, the development of Puerto Madero was delegated to a public corporation, the Historic Puerto Madero Corporation (CAPMSA), but only received public funding in the form of the land transfer itself (Jajamovich:2016:168). CAPMSA was therefore required to procure private funding. The initial plan took its inspiration from Barcelona, a city that just had finished a successful port-revitalization of their own (Jajamovich:2016:169). In the initial years of its development, this inspiration led to the project becoming intertwined with several Catalonian urban actors (Jajamovich:2016:169). This perhaps also explains why the early development of the plan took a holistic, public-utility approach, akin to a European mindset. However, both the Barcelonian involvement and the holistic strategy was abandoned after increasing pressure from its multitude of international investors. Instead, the structure of the project was re-directed towards a Northern-American approach which meant a swift and efficient yet flashy transformation to encourage mass tourism (Sherman:2012:48). This direction pleased its international investors, primarily hailing from countries of the Global North such as Germany and the United States, whom had little interest in appeasing local ambitions if it wasn't profitable (Sherman:2012:49). Like Ørestad, the layout of Puerto Madero is linear, but instead of following a public transit line, it is clustered around an inland canal with boardwalks on its sides. Its composition is comprised of either large blocks or skyscrapers, both mostly built in glass, aluminum and steel. Five bridges over the canal connect the neighborhood to the rest of the city but there is no connection to the city's metro system as of yet. While Puerto Madero is one of the most expensive residential areas in Buenos Aires, its housing capacity exceeds way beyond the estimated population growth of the city (Meneses et. al.:2019:165). This, in conjunction with its international architecture presenting a stark contrast to its surroundings, has garnered much local critique, primarily focusing on how isolated and out-of-touch the development project feels (Sherman:2012:55). Looking at Puerto Madero within the frame of the discussion of the previous chapter can perhaps explain how the neighborhood have failed to become a coherent part of the Buenos Aires. In the development of Puerto Madero, some considerations have been done in regard to establishing a sense of temporality. On the western side of the canal, brick

buildings from the old port have been restored and featured prominently. The project's history of Barcelonian involvement is also represented in the landmark-bridge, Puente de la Mujer, designed by famous Catalonian architect Santiago Calatrava (1951-) (Meneses et. al.:2019:163). However, the starkness of the contrast between the old port area, however bleak it may have been, and the modern, somewhat sanitized space it is now could be argued to be a monumental rift in the continuity of the place. This rift could create a loss of connection and a sense of disorientation in Buenos Aires' citizens, which is hardly mended by the inclusion of a few traditional port buildings. The modern, sleek structures that stand between the rest of the city and Rio de la Plata could also be argued to obscure the sense of scale that the area would supposedly contribute. The initial excitement of the revitalization was, in part, founded on the connection between the seafront and the city that it would bring (Sherman:2012:30).

The landmark of Puente de la Mujer, constantly watched by skyscrapers (fig. 40)

Despite this ambition, the towering skyscrapers and solid blocks actually obscure the view to natural areas around the river that lie behind them as well as make the traversal experience of getting to them an imposing and monotonous experience. In regard to the experience of tactile encounters in Puerto Madero, the critique applied to Ørestad also belongs here, that being in the port's lack of material diversity and

poor protection against wind. However, relating to Merleau-Ponty's description of the tactile relationship between subject and creator (Merleau-Ponty:2012:326), it could be further argued that the tactile encounters found in the sleek and modern constructions and infrastructure of Puerto Madero alienate the citizen in their inherent foreign and industrial materiality and craftmanship. This serves to further the sense of isolation and foreign dissonance in the neighborhood. Looking at the sum of this critique, it seems that the intention to re-connect Buenos Aires with its port-identity through Puerto Madero did not turn out to be a high priority amongst the stakeholders of its development. Rather, its motivations could be alluded to, through the observed focus on tourism and its inflated housing prices, to be an attempt at primarily procuring profits. While the intentions and ambitions in such projects are undeniably complex and ever-changing entities, the fact remains, that the development of Puerto Madero have left the city with inaccessible and incoherent urban architecture. The little public utility it had provided, primarily in its canal-side boardwalks, is often critiqued for only adhering to either tourists or young middle-class citizens looking to imitate the perceived life of an international elite (Sherman:2012:54).

An entirely new urban environment
Forest City, Johor, Malaysia

The master plan for Forest City, Jokor. A cityscape covered in greenery (Fig. 41)

Building and populating an entirely new city from the ground up is a considerably more difficult task than extending an already existing city with a new neighborhood. With no pre-existing population, infrastructure or identity to lean on, an entirely new urban environment must ensure all of these on its own with synchronous timing. At the same time, building a city from scratch presents a unique opportunity to forge unprecedented urban identities and explore new planning ideals. In recent years, entirely new urban environments have been emerging in East- and South East Asia as a consequence of the regions' intense economic and demographic growth (Kawai, Wignaraja:2010:6). While they in most cases are built to alleviate pressure from established metropolises, they have also become a way to spatialize visions of regional power, progressivity and identity (Williams:2016:4). Turning the attention to a country with such rising growth, Malaysia, this trend is highly visible. While Malaysia's economic growth has arrived at a more delayed pace than that of its neighbors, Thailand and Singapore, the country has enjoyed a momentum of their own in the last 10 years (Nurgazina et. al.:2021:60195). This growth comes, in part, as a consequence of an immensely active Malaysian government. An example of the government's efforts to ensure economic prosperity can be found in the Iskandar Economic Zone. Located on the Johor peninsula just opposite of the economic powerhouse of Singapore, the zone is intended to inspire the development of several projects that will procure foreign investment by employing specific liberal regulations and incentives (Avery, Moser:2023:222). While most of these projects takes the form of trading or industrial infrastructure, some aspire to become new urban centers. The most prevalent of these is the "Forest City", a large-scale urban development built on four artificial islands of the coast of Johor. The ambitions behind the project are two-fold; Firstly, it aims to create a bustling metropolis that can compete with the neighboring cities Johor Bahru and Singapore which will create a platform for generating economic activity in the region (Williams:2016:6). Secondly, the project intends to have an encompassing environmental dimension (Avery, Moser:2023:223). This goes for both the construction of the city, seeking to utilize progressive, harm-reductive methods, as well as the plans for the lived experience of its residents, promising a seamless co-existence with the surrounding fauna and flora of the coastal region. In this way, Forest City is a part of a larger trend of emerging "eco-cities" in Asia, similar to the developments of Dongtan Eco City in China (Choi, Sengupta:2020:371) and Songdo in South Korea (Bartmanski.et.al.:2023:674). A key element to the story of Forest City is its primarily Chinese investors and planners. The main developer of the city is a private property

developer named “China’s Country Garden Group”, and the primary contributors of its 100 billion $ funding are likewise of Chinese origin (Koh:2021:2). While this could merely be an expression of the intention for foreign investment in the Iskandar Economic Zone, the heavy Chinese involvement alludes to the Forest City being a part of a Chinese foreign strategy (Avery, Moser:2023:225). Looking at the master plan for Forest City, it actually seems to remedy several of the critiques I established of contemporary, homogenized architecture in Chapter 4. A defining feature of the city will be its “vertical greening”, promising a “forest-like environment” with vertical pathways and buildings covered in an intricate ecosystem of plant life (forestcitygpv:2024). This would provide a pleasant sense of temporality with the passing of seasons bringing blooming flowers and hanging fruit, and it would also ensure rich tactile encounters in the sheer diversity of its natural systems. Forest City also attempts to do away with the relationship to scale found in most contemporary urban environments by providing an intricate network of lifted pathways. These would provide a more intricate and personal traversal experience while also sheltering the pedestrian from vehicular traffic. With these ambitious plans in sight, construction on Forest City began in 2014 with the goal of eventually housing 700.000 citizens. A substantial amount of the construction has already been finished, including residential skyscrapers, shopping malls, a luxury hotel and even a local museum. Despite this progress, enthusiasm for the project has seriously dampened, as the city has little to no population growth (Avery, Moser:2023:223).

The development of Forest City as of 2023 (Fig. 42)

The low population numbers have led popular media, such as BBC, to call Forest City a "ghost city" which is a media-moniker for the phenomenon of unpopulated urban projects in Asia (Marsh:2023). Despite the lofty promises of the master plan, looking at both the planned and already built architectural form of Forest City from the perspective of my phenomenological inquiry could provide some ideas as to why the city has gotten a bad start. The architectural identity of the constructions in Forest City follow, with no deviation, the anonymous, non-ornamental international style. Rectangular skyscrapers of glass, aluminum and concrete form its skyline. These constructions do not leave much to build an identity around. The lack of authenticity within its visual identity makes it clear, that the inclusion of natural elements is designed to be its ultimate saving grace. Paradoxically, Forest City may actually contribute to a disconnection with the natural environment, it proclaims to become a caretaker for. The seabed in which the artificial islands were installed was considered to be the largest seagrass environment in Malaysia, providing a home for several unique wildlife species (Williams:2016:4). It was for a long time in consideration of getting special environmental protection (Williams:2016:4). The Forest City intends to make up for this intrusion by covering the city in plants and green spaces. However, while the marketing for the project promises an experience of connection to nature (forestcitygpv:2024), there is no mention of how the lived experience in the city will actually engage with this nature besides looking at it. It therefore seems that the "natural" elements of Forest City are purely a visual choice, swapping a complex ecosystem for passive flora. This resonates with Grosz' critique of contemporary architecture's tendency to focus purely on visual elements (Grosz:2001:xviii). If the supposed connection between resident and nature were to have meaning, it should encompass more tactile encounters than visual. The idea for Forest City to become a bustling business hub is also at odds with the temporality of nature. The transient lifestyles within business practice does not seem compatible with the slower continuance of natural temporalities. In matters of scale, the Forest City also does not deliver an "organic" experience. While the inclusion of pedestrian pathways covered in greenery is a good idea, the homogeneity and rigid stratification of its constructions leaves little reason for such traversal. The residential skyscrapers, while providing nice views of the waterfront, also removes the resident further from the supposed "city forest". In light of this critique, it is therefore not surprising to hear that the Forest City has led to serious environmental detriments in its vicinity (Avery, Moser:2023:231) (Williams:2016:4). With poor public reception, low population numbers and failed environmental ambitions, it seems that

Forest City shares a similar fate to the previously mentioned "eco-cities" of Dongtan and Songdo, in that their initial promises tend to devolve into performativity without regard for actually building a viable urban identity around environmental matters (Choi, Sengupta:2020:371) (Bartmanski.et.al.:2023:674).

Having now investigated three different examples of recent urban developments over the globe, I can draw some conclusions. Firstly, it is observable how the cases all fit into my description of global architectural homogenization from the first chapters. They all feature the multinational affluence and fluidity described in Castells' "Networking Society" in the employment of international architects and backing of multinational real estate developers and investors. Likewise, the spatialized dynamics of profit-accumulation and the tendency for these to follow similar strategies are visible. It is clear that the effort to maximize efficiency and reduce costs produces a certain urban expression, as the three cases all feature strikingly similar architecture. Finally, the specific style of architecture, the sleek, non-ornamental style of Modernism, is the prominent aesthetic form and identity of all three projects. While Forest City, unlike Puerto Madero and Ørestad, is primarily backed by East Asian investors, the choices and strategies regarding its urban formation follow a western format. While I don't regard just three examples to be a total representation of the contemporary global urban form, the commonalities between these vastly stratified developments serve to speak about an architectural practice homogenizing. It is therefore concerning that they all lack regard for the sense of place. Common characteristics observed in the cases' urban formation include an absence of rich tactile encounters, an obscuring and sterilized scale and poor temporal markers and historical identity. While there were intentions and promises in all the projects to fulfill heterogenous needs, they, in reality, seemed to only focus on a few, functional purposes, mainly providing proximity to a desired destination. In the case of Ørestad, this was the city center, in case of Puerto Madero, the seafront, and in Forest City, the economic giant of Singapore. It seems that this functionalist mentality, which ignores such heterogenous needs, does not provide sustainable and healthy urban environments. While I allude to the failure of these developments as being a result of their disregard for the sense of place, their trajectory can also be explained from a socio-economic or political viewpoint. Ørestad's population growth was seriously hampered by investors refusal to decrease property prices (Adminis:2023:4). In the political discussion of Puerto Madero, it came to light how the area was really directed towards the wealthier classes of Argentina, showing the difficulty of creating public utility in a demographically unequal society

(Sherman:2012:54). Being entirely developed by a Chinese company, Forest City was marketed towards Chinese nationals. However, a mix of Covid and former Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, arguing against the presence of Chinese activity in Malaysia caused hesitation amongst this demographic to move there (Avery, Moser:2023:223). While the socio-economic and political circumstances surrounding an urban development is always crucial, the expression and form is as well. Thinking of the critique of this type of urban architecture that has been established, it seems that the cases would have had more success, had they taken these considerations into account.

To put this into perspective, there exists contemporary urban trends and behaviors that do adhere to a sense of place successfully. An increasingly popular approach informing the form and aesthetic of urban environments is "vernacular architecture". It describes architecture informed by the historic and traditional methods of its location, especially those conducted by non-professional actors (Guillaud:2014:33). Vernacular architecture has not only proven effective in resisting aesthetic standardization by revitalizing historic expressions but has also been shown to achieve sustainable results by employing pre-industrial, local materials and solutions to combat environmental adversities (Olukoya et. al.:2020:62).

The Yves Saint Laurent museum in Marrakesh, Morocco is heralded as a pristine example of utilizing traditional building techniques in new urban architecture (Fig. 43)

Numerous examples of direct political intervention against global urban architectural homogenization also exist. In Barcelona, the formation of "superblocks", zones with restricted vehicular access, have become famous for their ability to introduce heterogenous activities in an urban environment usually dominated by cars (Zografos et. al.:2020:1). Being a city with a rich aesthetic history, Kyoto has imposed several regulations controlling the selection of building materials, styles and colors in new developments to ensure that they blend in with its traditional aesthetic (Srinurak et. al.:2022:9). Another phenomenon worthy of mention are efforts to bridge gaps between rural and urban compositions and practices. Many city-governments have shown ambition to increase the biodiversity of their urban environments with some already achieving success (Xie, Bulkeley:2020:77). Practices usually found in rural contexts, such as small-scale farming, have found their way into urban environments in recent years, combatting both food-reliance and social isolation (Altieri, Nicholls:2020:205). An introduction of more natural processes as well as an increased diversity of practices in urban environments serve to enrich the heterogeneity of their form and aesthetic. Altogether, these examples of contemporary urban practices illustrate an awareness towards the problems posed by global architectural homogenization which shows that the critique made in this work does not stand alone. Overall, the observations made in this chapter underscore the danger of neglecting a sense of place in urban development. The common issues among the cases examined in the chapter reveal the risks of homogenized architectural practices that disregard human-scale experiences. While the challenges are significant, the examples of contemporary urban practices that successfully resist global architectural homogenization offer hope. They demonstrate that with an attentiveness to the sense of place and an emphasis on diversity, contemporary cities can be healthily heterogenous.

DISCUSSION

Before concluding, I would like to address some potential critiques of this work as well as other ways I could have conducted this study.

In Chapter 1, I argue that the first prominent case of an architectural culture spreading globally can be witnessed in the colonial conduct of pre-industrial Western European powers. It is therefore worth mentioning that there were far-reaching spreads of architectural cultures before. Hindu traders disseminated architectural products along their trade-routes all over Southeast Asia in the 4th to the 13th century (Munandar:2016:149). Around the Mediterranean, the vast influence of cultures such as the Romans (Häussler:1999:1) or the Moors (Kalmar:2001:69) can be witnessed in architecture across three continents. While there are many more examples, they all arguably did not have the global reach that Western European powers in the colonial era enjoyed and are therefore not as "global".

With that being said, the various cultures and eras in which one could argue the spread of architectural cultures across the globe started highlight antitheses to the theories surrounding homogenization under globalization. As prevalent as theories discussing the convergence of cultures and practices are, so are theories arguing for increased heterogeneity. They are particularly commonly found in post- or neocolonial arguments, arguing for the emergence of resistant or hybridized cultures as a consequence of colonial conduct (Robinson:2008:140). A noteworthy example of such an argument can be found in the work of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1949-). Appadurai denotes the notion of global homogenization as a simplification, arguing that although various processes expose local practices to homogenization, these processes are repurposed into new heterogenous behaviors and responses (Appadurai:1996:42). There are numerous examples of the standardized architecture that I describe in this study having been made "local". Graffiti culture is a prevalent example of re-claiming aesthetics in homogenized architecture. Another example could be the emergence of music cultures such as hip-hop and rap, where standardized and often poorly implemented urban neighborhoods becomes a backdrop for deeply personal and identity-driven narratives. Appadurai's heterogenous perspective on globalization therefore challenges the conception of homogenization, that I have established in this work.

However, while the advent of new cultures emerging as responses to processes such as capitalism or cultural western imperialism does complicate a notion of a world culture homogenizing, I would argue, that the very apparent success of these processes suggests an unmistaken albeit somewhat varied convergence.

The dynamics and legacy of Western powers plays an important role in this work. However, this study's focus on the conduct of Western powers, not only in defining the origin of architectural homogenization but also in the critique of its contemporary state, could be argued to represent a paradox. While I find the critique of Western influence warranted and crucial to the discussion of contemporary urban architecture, I then choose to also substantiate my critique in another western school of thought, phenomenology. Perhaps, in light of my critique of the Western hemisphere, I could have engaged with theories about urbanization and the subjective experience of it from the Global South. Urban theorist Ananya Roy (1970-), for example, would have been a relevant inclusion. Her work primarily revolves around the effects of globalization on urban contexts, particularly in the context of her home country, India. She argues that the definitions and conceptualizations of urban dynamics are constructed around the Euro-American urban experience, neglecting perspectives from non-western urban landscapes (Roy:2009:820). This becomes particularly problematic as both processes and actors hailing from the West rapidly shape cities of the Global South (Roy:2009:77). Another fruitful theorist to investigate would have been the architect and urban planner, Raquel Rolnik (1956-), who have been immensely influential in defining the tensions between global finance and urban structuring in Latin America. With a particular focus on housing as an urban dynamic, Rolnik critiques neoliberal practices' tendency to neglect the needs of communities in favor of privatized and individualized economies, generating social isolation (Rolnik:2019:19). Of particular interest to this work is Rolnik's insistence on attributing urban citizens with more holistic and dynamic needs than merely lacking housing (Rolnik:2019:16). In her arguments, a crucial urban amenity such as housing becomes a constituent of one's identity and sense of social belonging (Rolnik:2019:132). Still, while the work of these theorists touches upon underlying ontological conditions, they remain mainly in the realm of socio-economic and neocolonial analysis. Alas, pursuing such theories from the Global South would have meant a study more focused on the neocolonial and socio-economic dynamics of global urban architecture. In my investigations, I was unable to find theorists engaging with the ontological perspectives, I sought.

Therefore, phenomenology remained as the guiding frame for my critique. However, while phenomenology provides suitable arguments for the study of the subjective experience as well as ways to investigate it, it has suffered substantial critique since its inception. I have already mentioned how Heidegger problematized Husserl's description of a pure phenomenological experience. This presented an effective put-down to the phenomenological method. However, I do not utilize the phenomenological method in this study but rather the ontological arguments about subjective experience. With that being said, the idea that it is difficult to separate an ontological experience from its social and cultural context reverberates in famous criticisms of the school, hereby attacking not only the phenomenological method of reduction but also a key ontological argument within the school. During a lecture in 1964, philosopher Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) critiqued phenomenology's emphasis on subjective experience and abstraction which risks depoliticizing philosophy and neglecting the role of ideology in shaping consciousness (Marcuse:1965:21). This critique would be further elaborated by historian of ideas, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in an interview in 1978, where he would problematize the conception of a self as an autonomous subject, hereby challenging the coherence between subjective consciousnesses, that phenomenology assumes (Foucault:2012:100). Particularly these critiques are important to mention in relation to this work. Firstly, inherent to this study is the assumption of the existence of ontological experiences that are either separated from or underlying social and cultural contexts. Secondly, it is assumed that such ontological experiences could be shared by anyone who could be given the status of "urban citizen". To answer Marcuse's critique of phenomenology as being "depoliticized", I must disagree. While I understand that phenomenology's focus on subjective experience could be seen as a neglect of social dynamics and historical forces, I would argue that this focus provides a way in which to investigate the impact of these dynamics in a generalizable way. This work is arguably quite political, highlighting the effects of dynamics such as capitalism's or western imperialism's effects on the urban citizen through the arguments of subjective experience provided by phenomenology. Much more impressive examples of phenomenology being used to describe political conditions can for example be found in Merleau-Ponty's embodiment (Merleau-Ponty:2012:307) and Jean Paul Sartre's (1905-1980) existential ethics (Priest, Sartre:2002:26). Answering Foucault's doubt towards collectivizing conscious experience could require a lifetime of work. I also, as mentioned, do acknowledge that many parameters could define one's urban

existence. Phenomenology does indeed linger in a theoretically uncomfortable state between its subjectivism and its generalizable ideas of conscious experience. Without unravelling the entire argumentative history of the juxtaposition between subject and object, I consider a position that does not actively decide between the two to be alluring. Considering the characteristics that define a "city", a settlement with a certain size and congestion, paired together with the apparent contemporary homogenization of such environments, it is perhaps fair to state that there is an existence of generalizable living experiences within such environments, although with different reactions or outcomes. Perhaps most relevant for the future of this study is the common critique of phenomenology's empirical rigor. Phenomenology is often criticized for its reliance on introspection and subjective reflection, which some argue lacks the empirical rigor of scientific methods. Taken in the context of this study, I would agree with this critique. It would prove fairly difficult to reliably, empirically assess the ontological disturbance of urban citizens, that I describe here. It is inherently abstract. However, the purpose of this study is not to provide an empirically replicable formulation but rather to establish concepts about the conscious experience of urban citizens. While it may be difficult to test empirically, I aspire to nonetheless inform a reflective inquiry and understanding about how we design cities.

However, the notion that my work is neglecting social and cultural aspects of the ontology of the urban citizen, still lingers. Perhaps I overestimate the effect that the formation and aesthetic of urban environments have on citizens. In Chapter 1, I highlighted Lefevbre's critique of Modernism as being too deterministic in regard to the role that urban organization plays in the lived experience of urban citizens. In fact, this is one of the most common critiques against Modernism (Aoki:1993:729). The idea that one could usher in a complete rejuvenation of societal circumstances through urban development alone does after all seem easily refutable. What good does functional equivalence serve without an increase in socio-economic means or cultural acceptance? Despite the heavy critique of Modernism, that I conduct in this study, it could be argued that I make the same mistakes. After all, it is entirely possible to live a good life in the type of urban environment that I describe. This becomes a question of architecture and urban development's supervenience on larger socio-economic, political and cultural developments. If urban formation and aesthetic is entirely dependent on or in accordance with grander trajectories, then the causal influence on urban citizens must ultimately derive from these trajectories and not the urban architecture

itself. This dynamic is present in the critiques of homogenizing urban architecture as consequences of neoliberal or neocolonial processes. It is arguably also present in my own arguments, most prevalently in Chapter 2, where I attribute architectural developments to larger contours of global converging practices such as ICT's, capitalism and Western imperialism. One could therefore question, that even if the architecture was changed in the ways that I suggest, would these disturbances disappear? I would argue that although urban architecture is undeniably shaped by its contemporary cultural, political and economic context, it can affect the conditions of its occupants by itself. Architecture acts as a physical conduit for these trajectories. Without the urban architecture permeating these processes in physical space, they would arguably be felt less. The physical presence of urban architecture therefore confirms, at least to a degree, its causal autonomy. Whatever informed its design, architecture shapes the urban experience by deciding its physicality, both in its function and aesthetic expression. Even if the urban formation is strongly incentivized by larger societal trajectory, an example being Soviet urban planning, the link between this trajectory and the design of the environment is not linear. It is up to the architect or urban planner to interpret how to emanate such ideals or needs into a physical manifestation. There is for that reason also a degree of autonomy amongst the actors shaping urban environments. Hence, while I would agree that an over-determinacy on the impact that the design of urban environments can have on citizens is neglecting other factors of healthy urban existence, the impact of urban architecture cannot simply be reduced to its surrounding political and social economy.

CONCLUSION

Inspired by my anecdotal encounters with cityscapes around the world, I set out to understand and describe the relationship between architectural homogenization and the subjective experience of urban citizens. By synthesis and contrast of existing theory and concepts, I sought to establish a theoretical framework in which to assess the consequences of a contemporary urban architectural practice experiencing standardization and uniformity. To guide this process, I let myself be informed by four research questions, which I have progressively answered through this work:

What is "architectural homogenization"?
Architectural homogenization refers to the observable trend of creating urban environments that look and feel increasingly similar across different cities worldwide. A particular history and development were attributed to this process, showing how a confluence of western ideologies, power consolidations and technological progress have formatted a distinct urban expression. Furthermore, larger trajectories such as the advent of ICT's, neo-liberal economic practice and modern western imperialism were shown to provide underlying incentives for contemporary urban architecture to homogenize on a global scale.

How can we describe "sense of place" and its relevance for urban existences?
The sense of place is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the emotional, sensory, and cognitive connections individuals form with their surroundings. Through the school of phenomenology, it was uncovered how consciousness always relates to its surrounding environment. The sense of place is therefore ontologically constitutive. It involves elements such as the temporal dimension (how time is experienced in a place), scale (the relationship between the individual and the shapes of environments), and tactility (the sensory experiences derived from physical interactions with the environment). The sense of place could be argued to be crucial for urban existences as it enables individuals to orient themselves, form attachments, and derive meaning from their interactions with the urban fabric.

How does architectural homogenization affect the sense of place within the urban citizen?
Homogenized urban environments disrupt the sense of place by erasing unique temporal markers, standardizing scales, and reducing tactile richness. These disruptions lead to feelings of disorientation, alienation, and a loss of meaningful connections with the urban space. When urban environments become visually and experientially similar, they fail to engage the sensory and emotional faculties of individuals, resulting in a diminished capacity to relate to and identify with their surroundings. This erosion of the sense of place undermines the ability of urban citizens to develop a coherent and enriching relationship with their environment.

What consequences does the relationship between architectural homogenization and sense of place have?
The relationship between architectural homogenization and the sense of place has profound ontological consequences for urban citizens. The erosion of a unique sense of place can lead to existential confusion, a diminished sense of belonging, and a disassociation from urban environments. This disconnection affects not only individual well-being but also the social and cultural vitality of urban communities. The homogenized urban landscape becomes a backdrop for a shallow, transactional mode of existence, where the deep, meaningful interactions that enrich human life are stifled. Consequently, the loss of a robust sense of place can have far-reaching implications for the sustainability and resilience of urban societies. In the three highlighted urban developments, it was shown how their neglect of a sense of place could have a correlation to their poor reception.

The hypothesis underlying this work posited that aesthetically similar environments erode our ability to relate to the environment around us, resulting in existential confusion and disassociation from urban spaces. This study has provided arguments to support this hypothesis. By examining both theoretical perspectives and concrete examples of contemporary urban developments, it has been demonstrated how architectural homogenization can negatively impact urban citizens. In concluding this thesis, I return to the wish expressed in the introduction; to contribute to a more informed and careful approach to urban design. This study has highlighted the impact that architectural homogenization could have on the lived experiences of urban citizens. The findings suggest that the trend toward standardized urban environments can lead to a

diminished sense of place and identity among city inhabitants. As the global population continues to urbanize, it becomes increasingly crucial to consider the ontological implications of our design choices. By doing so, we can foster urban environments that not only meet functional needs but also enhance the well-being and sense of belonging of urban residents. It is my hope that this work can aid to inspire a reevaluation of current practices and encourage a more holistic approach to urban design, ultimately leading to cities that are reflective of the heterogeneity of human existence.

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