Book Review

Review of Hauderowicz, Dominique and Kristian Ly Serena, eds. *Age-Inclusive Public Space*. Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag. 2020. pp. 237. Price: $32 (Hardcover).

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Age-Inclusive Public Space is edited by Dominique Hauderowicz and Kristian Ly Serena, owners of 'dominique + serena,' a young Copenhagen-based architectural firm that operates at the crossroads of architecture, art, and politics. The book documents conversations with 19 other architects, geographers, psychologists, philosophers, and social scientists, each of them writing with a very clear perspective of using, designing, and transforming public space into age-inclusive space. This book speaks to us, the authors of this review, who are an anthropologist and an architect with a clear pedagogical purpose, namely, to teach our students in architecture and anthropology in a cross-faculty course that we have called Design Anthropology. This course bridges disability design studies and architectural anthropology and would benefit from utilizing this book as a major reference tool. *Age-Inclusive Public Space* is a timely and engaging book for students and practitioners alike, and will stay relevant for years to come.

The book is attractively produced with a cover in tissue, a very clear outline, references throughout the pages, and connections between the different chapters. It follows a logical framework that carefully manages to benefit from many disciplines, including architecture and anthropology. The book is organized into five parts. Each part is introduced with an introductory essay and followed by short illustrative chapters. The included color photographs in the book are not merely illustrative; they require and invite readers to study them. The last part is the longest and ensures that readers will not only be able to think about what they learned but also to put this knowledge into practice. This makes it a very enchanting and inspiring publication that may appeal to a wide audience.

The editors work through a simple yet fundamental thesis, namely that age-segregated spaces are not likely the solution for the challenges of an aging population. They assert that spaces that are created for particular age-groups, such as playgrounds (whether they are designed for children, adults, or elderly people), are rather limiting. Again and again, somewhat in theoretical terms, but surely in examples and some nicely executed drawings and photographs, the authors provide many practical tools that help the thinker and the practitioner.

The theoretical tools to think through the central thesis of the volume are provided throughout the book. They comprise of four introductory thematic chapters headed by design stimulating and inspirational keywords "Ageing (& Public Space)," "Elasticity," "Agency," and "Belonging." Elaborations on elasticity of space, borders and borderlands, in-between spaces, landscapes, bodies and senses, and affordances provided in these thematic chapters are insightful and practical. These concepts surely highlight the central thesis of the book, but also provide ample evidence that they can be translated in useful and microlevel design interventions, such as the implemented design for a polyvalent landscape of South Zealand in Denmark (196-199).

Throughout the different contributions, there are both positive cases and cases that introduce the limitations of designing age-inclusive public spaces. Three cases are particularly noteworthy. Firstly, in Chapter 2, "Elasticity" (68-71), the editors focus on 'seeing' sites of elasticity. Elastic in-between space, as can be seen in Amsterdam, from the work of Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck, is space that is initially not intended or lost space, such as the side-walks and other areas that van Eyck created. In-between spaces provide space in which nothing should be happening, but in which brief social contacts, encounters, and exchanges could occur between people. In-between space increases the landscape of affordances.

Secondly, in Chapter 4, "Belonging," the editors explore the Japanese facility, Aoi Care (130-137). It is a 'rare' example of a small-scale multifunctional care home or *takurosho* that is embedded in the local community. The key intervention here was tearing down the walls that previously surrounded the facility, so that everyone could enter and leave the space freely. The facility thus became inclusive because it allowed and enabled more connection. The space could come to life and be constantly thickened and redesigned through the trajectories of various people of different ages and thus enhanced the potential of intergenerational contact.

Thirdly, Chapter 5, "Play Street, The Transformation of a Copenhagen Play Street" (168-173), shows another interesting case study in two photographs: one of the situation of a playground street in the 1950s, when it was closed to traffic, and a photograph by dominique + serena of 2019 when the street was again adapted and certain areas fenced off for ball games. Creating such user-specific spaces seems counterproductive to the idea of advocating and creating age-inclusive layouts of public space. This example shows how the potential of spaces to be elastic can also limit their inclusivity. In this case, fencing off an already car-free playstreet was an unnecessary intervention, curtailing the possibilities for social contact between the primary users (children) and passers-by.

Part 5, "Designing for Agency & Belonging" (152-230) is the most elaborate. Interestingly, the concept of agency was already introduced in Chapter 3, by presenting active lives through movement and participation, but is here used to denote design attitudes. Hauderowicz and Serena argue for abandoning the idea of public space as a "performance landscape" and adopting the attitude of the "gardener responsible for setting the conditions for favorable practices to emerge" (153). This enabling attitude involves eliminating significant elements from public spaces to create openness, to allow ingoing and outgoing movement, and to make space for people to fill in the potential and to engage in place-making, thus creating the road to belonging. "Polyvalence," "atmosphere," "reminiscence," and "urban wilderness," then become design practices that not only hold the potential for intergenerational contact, but more importantly enhance vibrant and interactive moves between designing and undesigning culture-specific public spaces.

However, reading this book with experiences and perspectives from Design Anthropology teaches us that some of the keywords would better be substituted to prompt more and differently inclusive design

approaches. For instance, "Age-neutral" (160) sounds weird and does not celebrate life in all of its diversity, and "Age-inclusive," as mentioned in the title of the book, invites for a more affirmative intergenerational approach to people-centered design and can hardly ever be 'neutral' in the way carbon-neutrality is discussed. Similarly, in contemporary discourses, 'boundaries' refers to geographical and geo-political issues of closure and exclusion. "Inclusive Boundaries" (177) thus still emphasizes segregation rather than spatial and cultural mediation of human-environment relationships. On the contrary, the concept of 'inclusive thresholds'—from gradual trespassing to in-between and transitional concepts of public space—is far more inspirational to work with as a designer or to communicate what the more intrinsic (tangible and intangible) properties and qualities of the proposed design are all about, as they are put to work to embrace the widest spectrum of all-inclusive human ability. Finally, the term "Polyvalence" (178) is far too generic to explore as a triggering design approach. Designing for 'Multiplicity' and 'Sequential Temporariness' would have served the chapter better.

But, the terms "Atmosphere,"(200) "Reminiscence" (214) and "Urban Wilderness" (230), on the contrary, are great entry points to inspire designers to produce more elastic space-time concepts. A concept in general not only implies a range of ideas, but also articulates a design intent to address a spatial and cultural question that seeks a solution, through the process of designing. Architecture is here approached as a four-dimensional entity (of line, plane, volume and time); space and time are inseparable conditions when it comes to the experience of the built environment and this complexity is aptly captured in the aforementioned concepts. The term "atmosphere" as a design tool is inherent to any user-centered design process from the perspective of multi-sensoriality or what is referred to as haptic experience of space, taking all five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling) into account as parameters for inclusive designing. Following this inspiration, Public Space Design takes all senses into consideration as a structuring principle to guide and reconnect people in a more convivial way (200-209). The usage of the term "reminiscence" in landscape design becomes obvious when the editors touch upon the metaphorical relationship between characteristic natural landscapes and abstracted versions of it, inherent to Japanese design approaches. Two self explanatory pictures (228-229) show how the gravel courtyard with random rock (dry landscapes) temple compound in Kyoto acts as abstracted rememberance of the Japanese Inland Sea (wet landscape). The term "urban wilderness," may well be the most convincing keyword to over-design or to un-design all together when it comes to reconvert public space vacancies. The Tokyo Playpark as "intergenerational wilderness" is a striking example (234-237).

Indeed, the elasticity of space could be profitably linked to the making and undoing of non-space, a concept that anthropologist Marc Augé (1995) introduced to characterize Supermodern society. However, against Augé's arguing that places predominantly transform into non-places (Augé 1995, 75-115), we presume that Supermodern societies such as in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Tokyo too are capable of transforming non-spaces into spaces and places. Furthermore, the idea of in-between space requires connecting with in-between time, which can be made possible through introducing other time regimes, through play, the cinematic, and the performative. The book is of interest to design anthropologists but could also have been of interest to architectural anthropologists if it delved into a much deeper examination of the body and the multi-sensorial (see also Devlieger *et al.* 2006), the human, and the nonhuman in the environmental landscape. In his book, *Making*, Tim Ingold (2013) examines the forces and processes by which bodies, tools, and materials connect into a craftlike activity. Ingold argues that the four disciplines of Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture (the 4 As), are all or could be approached as ways of "thinking through making," thus reminding of the shared modes of being in the world and knowing about it as theorists and practitioners (2013, xi).

The book also has some limitations when it comes to the intercultural intent of the book. The best-practice interventions to designing and building more age-inclusive public spaces may well have directed the reader towards different places in the world. The micro-level scale of each intervention, on the one hand, and the reciprocity in terms of environmental conditions between the cases presented, on the other hand, may well evoke a cross-cultural approach to the topic of "Designing for Agency and Belonging." However, aging people, disabled people, or otherwise excluded and marginalized people may practice alternative ways of belonging that emphasize more culturized models of inclusion than through design. In vertical countries, such as Bhutan in the Himalayas, the wheelchair is not a designed product fitting an adapted environment, but a person carrying disabled people up and down the hills, in natural and man-made environments (Dujardin 2000, 2021). This requires thinking of the possibility of variation in inclusive practices, the landscape of care, and the cultivation of the vulnerable designer. Bringing vulnerability more squarely into the design process might provide an opportunity of bringing into the discussion the process of design itself, with a body, senses, and mobility. An approach geared towards disability as 'enabling' human conditions could profit from an approach that looks at bodies as affordances and people-as-affordance (Dokumaci 2019) and that looks to age-inclusive design as a vehicle to reconnect people at various levels of spatial and cultural interaction.

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