

Cities engage – consciously or subconsciously – in dialogues between space and user. In our research we pose the question of the spatial bases for a resilient and productive city and discuss the hypothesis that this dialogue has to be constructive and stimulating as regards to urban everyday spaces. Spatial essence of such polyvalent everyday places, that inspire identity, is the stimulating simultaneity of fullness and emptiness. For this we resort to Aldo Rossi's thoughts concerning the type on several levels and interpret this as a strong envelop which, apart from its function, is robust, meaningful and stimulating.

In the metaphorical sense of the ink drawing *Shōin-zu* (Pinewood, 1590) of the Japanese artist Hasegawa Tōhaku it is not the most exact reproduction of a situation that is of concern, but the imagination or idea of an assumed spatial condition that leaves space for interpretation. What has been drawn provides that strong character-frame for the possible, that which was not drawn, and generates atmosphere because it leaves room for interpretation within this framework. The simultaneity of fullness and emptiness, in urban everyday places provides this strong character-frame and the possibilities which span within this framework.

In order to understand the interrelation, it is necessary to define the terms here.

Full Emptiness

The term emptiness describes an empty space that is set in a powerful, strong framework in urban planning and architecture. This framework stages the space in between, which emanates in the interplay with and in

relation to the context. The strong framework generates resistance, which has to be overcome by the users. The space has to be read and requires discussion. The emptiness represents the openness as regards to utilization and meaning. The space is available, yet, it can and has to be interpreted. The space is characterized by emptiness, spans polyvalent possibilities and stimulates appropriation, interaction and conquest. Thus, it is a space of possibility and creativity for the user; a space where s/he enters a dialogue. Because utilization and interpretation are concepts for the user to decide, an arbitrariness is generated, which requires that, what happens there and can happen there, has to be negotiated in the everyday use. Emptiness stands for a space that has no defined use, that in the true sense of the word is useless and is open for a multitude of uses and utilizations. This space commands a certain 'outsize', a plus that opens up possibilities, not optimized and efficient. It offers time contingency, and the moment of change – with this dynamic – is inherent in it.

Empty Fullness

Fullness describes a multifaceted and multivalent space with a strong character, which disposes of a high design quality and valence. These qualities permanently bring its influence to bear and lend it stability. Fullness stands for sumptuousness, opulence and also abundance. The space inspires with its intensity of impressions and possibilities. An atmospheric, functional, social and programmatic density, and mix is generated. Because of overlay, multi-layering and, in line with this, complexity, the space cannot easily be comprehended and explained;

Fig 1 Hasegawa Tōhaku,
Shōrin-zu; english: 'Pinewood'
(1590)



Fig 1

it becomes difficult to control. In the sum of its characteristics it disposes of a distinctive and unique character. A space characterized by fullness is clearly identifiable and readable. It is the antipole to generic and featureless spaces. In this it is a space the user can identify with, a space that stimulates and inspires.

Fullness and emptiness as states stand in relation to and complement one another in resilient and productive urban everyday spaces. Only in combination and simultaneity of both will the desired stimulation emerge. Fullness is the basis for emptiness in the sense of interaction and interpretation. Emptiness is the basis for the fullness in the sense of possibilities and interpretation.

The relation describes conditions of the urban within the urban structure. This has to be negotiated over and over anew, socially as well as spatially, and in this requires social debate. For this dialogue, for this interaction between human and space, cultural competence to read and absorb space is indispensable. The people have to be empowered to enter the dialogue in order to be proactively effective in the city. To discover a space in a playful way, to become aware of it and actively appropriate it, can enable access to this.

Simultaneity creates an array of possible conditions between stability and dynamic in urban spaces resulting in polyvalent conditions, phases and rhythms. It is spaces of the everyday and mundane which transform and remain stable at the same time.

To observe the spatial conditions adding to this stimulating simultaneity, clearly identifiable structures are needed and characterful envelopes, which stimulate discussion and offer possibilities for appropriation. The

spaces offered have thus to be flexible and alterable and to enable change, however, without being featureless. These spaces dispose of atmospheres which stimulate interaction or rather emerge in it. Urban spaces, which are characterized by fullness and emptiness, form exactly this framework which can and has to be filled by its user. The constructed space communicates, it invites to engage in a dialogue with the space and in the space, and is a place for exchange and interaction. A rich nutrient medium for urbanity emerges; the user consequently becomes not only the producer of the urban but also a citizen due to this identification with the urban context.

The spatial fundamental conditions for a resilient and productive city in the sense of the simultaneity of fullness and emptiness can be observed and have to be designed. To this effect we employed a Research by Design Approach next to classic research approaches to approximate the characteristics and impact of such-like spaces. This transformative approach enables the spatial transfer of the theoretical findings as well as the spatial experiment for the development of robust and stimulating urban everyday spaces. The city lives of and with change, it needs the experiment in order to develop and form a nutrient medium. Conceptual designs generate narratives for the future of a place its form, purpose and meaning. Urban planning and architecture create the stable and robust framework that offers permanency and openness at the same time in order to absorb the volatility and changing social needs and requirements of its users.