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URBAN HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY
IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION





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12. Old City Atmospheres in the Age of Globalisation

Irina Oznobikhina

Introduction

Efforts to formulate basic foundational principles for approaching the cultural value of the built environment at the international level arise from current historical, political, social and cultural considerations. Within a rapidly developing design and technology industry, the issues of environmental protection and public sphere reform require specific contextual solutions. These solutions merit careful consideration in order to protect and simultaneously develop the urban landscape without risking the loss of essential cultural places and local identities.

The cultural heritage of the past and the rapid technological development of the future are intertwined within the process of globalisation, where the significant value of old cities is often underestimated. The focus of contemporary urban theorists is not limited to environmental problems, as they also seek methods for preserving cultural monuments and shed light on the ways contemporary cities are planned and governed. As 'rational' planning guided by market-led strategies remains a leading trend, atmospheric considerations related to the historical and sacred architecture of old cities is undeservingly neglected.

Within the architectural fabric of old towns, there is an entire class of building compositions designed to provide access to tangible cultural heritage while maintaining the intangible and spiritual essence of urban settings with its associated practices. The architectural sphere

is still dependent on social, economic and political factors, perpetually opposed to the ideological weight of prevailing technological trends and capitalistic schemes. Drawing attention to the significance of old cities and cultural heritage is imperative to bring them out of the shadows cast by the rapidly changing digital urban reality and into public discourse.

Maintaining atmospheres necessitates distinguishing the atmospheric features of cultural heritage from the disciplinary framework of architectural history and descriptive case studies. Alongside the concept of local identity, cultural uniqueness is based on many factors, including natural features and the built environment. As crucial elements of a cohesive whole, historical and contemporary land-use models, spatial organisations and visual representations should not be neglected, especially within the temporarily globalised world. The local identity of each city encompasses the seemingly intangible and transient sphere of the urban commons as well as cultural heritage sites, historical monuments and sacred architecture. These elements provide a deep sense of anamnestic habitualness, transferring connections with the past into a rapidly evolving future. Local identity and a sense of place generate an atmosphere of pre-reflective experience and the desire to rediscover historical parts of cities.

This chapter explores old city atmospheres, investigating the significance of authentic first-person experiences determined by one's bodily disposition and embodied presence in this space. This research examines the intrinsic correlation between place and atmosphere, enriching the (neo)phenomenological method with enactivist theory. The (neo)phenomenological paradigm is not as vague as it may initially seem, and its utility has been proven in many applied human sciences, including architecture, geography, sound studies and urban planning. However, methodologies used in urban studies remain constrained by cognitive and qualitative origins, often leading to predictable outcomes. The combination of methods within this research endeavours to integrate concepts, enabling the investigation of phenomena that defy explanation within the exclusive scope of conventional representational theory, with special focus on the affectivity of atmospheres.¹ Indeed, as unexpected

1 Derek McCormack, 'Engineering Affective Atmospheres on the Moving Geographies of the 1897 Andrée Expedition', *Cultural Geographies*, 15 (2008),

externalities of urban digitalisation and original atmospheres of old cities, such phenomena lie beyond what can be described by discursive and comparative methods alone. The benefits of this methodological combination form the core of this research, offering critical analysis of old city atmospheres.

At a more detailed level, the urban landscape, with its innumerable interconnected streets, squares, public spaces, residential quarters, functionally designed buildings and touristic routes, determine the city's image and, crucially, its atmosphere, which represents its genuine identity. While atmosphere is still a controversial concept evading clear definition and ontological clarity, there is a broad awareness of its essential features, especially within disciplines such as architecture and urban design. However, several questions remain as to atmosphere's role in old cities and architecture, its location, its individual and collective perception, the affective quality of its experience and the source of its significance for urban dwellers. The critical and ultimate question to emerge from this inquiry is how to save the old city atmosphere and integrate it into the contemporary urban context of a rapidly changing technological world. All these questions will be addressed within this chapter.

Affective Turn vs. Digital Turn

Digital communication and global technological development are steadily transforming our world, generating an increasing amount of data that opens an unexplored horizon of new discourses and levels of value creation. Digital technologies are systematically changing our way of life and the spaces we inhabit with a multitude of new digital services, facial recognition systems, artificial intelligence programs, machine learning, big data and the internet, among other indicators of the 'digital turn'.² Rather than analysing the reasons, social factors and inevitable political manipulations to come,³ this chapter shifts focus

413–30.

2 James Ash and Agnieszka Leszczynski, 'Digital Turn, Digital Geographies?', *Progress, Human Geography*, 42 (2016), 25–43.

3 Anna Artyushina, 'The EU Is Launching a Market for Personal Data. Here's What that Means for Privacy' (11 August 2020), *MIT Technology*

from the far-reaching consequences of urban digitalisation to investigate the way they affect the atmospheres of old cities.

The natural interests of large digital corporations (LDCs) lie in major profit increases and value surplus rather than the functional improvement and sustainability of urban environments. For companies like Amazon, Google, Microsoft and others, contemporary urbanity offers fertile ground for monopolisation and the strengthening of market positions through the range of services and technologies available to enhance their influence. In this context, user-friendliness, convenience and the utility of innovations supported by LDCs are some of the most effective tools for developing ‘surveillance capitalism’.⁴ This manipulative practice encourages market-led land-use paradigms and increases unforeseen risks within the urban planning sphere.⁵ It is important to emphasise that apart from personal data and statistics, the main manipulation objective of LDCs is the atmosphere, as the atmosphere⁶ of place is sounder than the product itself.⁷

Among recent ‘turns’, there has also been a so-called ‘affective turn’ in the humanities.⁸ The past decade has witnessed a growing interest in the concepts of atmosphere and affect for their potential to unify groups of people, furnishing a common reality for the ‘perceiver and the perceived’.⁹ This interest extends across various fields, particularly in sound studies, architecture, urban planning and geography. A key

Review, <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/08/11/1006555/eu-data-trust-trusts-project-privacy-policy-opinion/>

- 4 Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism—The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London: Profile Books, 2019).
- 5 Constance Carr and Markus Hesse, ‘Sidewalk Labs Closed Down—Whither the Google City?’ (2020), *Regions*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13673882.2020.00001070>
- 6 See Gernot Böhme, *Critique of Aesthetic Capitalism* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis International, 2017).
- 7 Philip Kotler, ‘Atmospherics as a Marketing Tool’, *Journal of Retailing*, 49 (1974), 48–64.
- 8 See Patricia Ticineto Clough, and Jean Halley, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Tonino Griffiero, *Atmospheres: Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces* (London, New York: Routledge, 2014); Tonino Griffiero and Marco Tedeschini, eds., *Atmosphere and Aesthetics: A Plural Perspective* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Dylan Trigg, ‘The Role of Atmosphere in Shared Emotion’, *Emotion, Space and Society*, 35 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2020.100658>
- 9 Gernot Böhme, ‘Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics’, *Thesis Eleven* 36 (1993), 113–26; Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2015); Jan Slaby and Rainer Mühlhoff, ‘Affect’, in *Affective Societies*:

focus from urban and sonic perspectives is cultivating a critical dialogue between theoretical explorations and empirical fieldwork.¹⁰

Recent analyses of urban environments¹¹ and architectural settings have argued that atmosphere constitutes a fundamental aspect of the human experience of the world, affecting the mood and well-being of all who perceive it and shaping pre-reflective experiences and emotional states. The concept of atmosphere is closely tied to notions developed by Martin Heidegger—*Stimmung* [mood] and *Befindlichkeit* [affective situation], referring to a specific sense of being-in (a mood) that can be understood as affective tonality infused into a space.¹² This ‘all-encompassing world orientation’ can be likened to other concepts unstructured within strict conceptual language frames, such as *Stimmung*, *ambiance* or *aura*. Gernot Böhme deals with this issue in his book *Atmospheric Architectures: The Aesthetics of Felt Spaces*, defining the phenomenal role atmospheres play in architecture and aesthetics and providing solid practical as well as theoretical grounding:

Sensing our own presence is simultaneously to sense the space in which we are present. Where we are (where we find ourselves) can still be interpreted topologically, as positioning in space. And indeed, in sensing our bodily presence, both the distances to things (or, better put, their oppressive closeness or their receding expanse) and the geometry of space come into play.¹³

Böhme aptly observes that this process is better understood in the sense of *bewegungsanmutungen* [movement impressions], such as rising or weighing down. We can sense not only what kind of space surrounds us but also its characteristics and, significantly, its atmosphere. For such an assessment of architectural space, this suggests that one

Key Concepts, ed. by Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 27–41.

- 10 Jürgen Hasse, *Atmosphären der Stadt. Aufgespürte Räume* (Berlin: Jovis, 2012); Federico De Matteis, ‘The City as a Mode of Perception: Corporeal Dynamics in Urban Space’, in *Handbook of Research on Perception-Driven Approaches to Urban Assessment and Design*, ed. by F. Aletta and J. Xiao (Hershey: IGI Global, 2018), pp. 434–57, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-3637-6.ch018>
- 11 Jean-Paul Thibaud, ‘Frames of Visibility in Public Places’, *Places*, 14 (2001), 42–47.
- 12 Romano Poca, *Heideggers Theorie der Befindlichkeit: sein Denken zwischen 1927 und 1933* (Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1996).
- 13 Gernot Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures: The Aesthetics of Felt Spaces* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p. 74.

must physically enter a space in order to 'attune' to it.¹⁴ In this way, atmospheres constrain, infuse and define not only inhabited space but also its temporal dimension, enveloping human values and cultural premises in accordance with the material environment. This illustrates atmospheres' historical particularities and reveals their temporal meaning. As Mikkel Bille, Peter Bjerregaard and Tim Sørensen note, atmospheres 'are at the same time a product of the past and future'.¹⁵ Anticipation and recollection of atmospheres represent the extremes of these temporalities in terms of atmosphere creation in architecture and urban planning. Moreover, this extends to human collectives, easily enfolding crowds and affecting them as a whole. While a wide range of literature illuminates the salient characteristics of atmosphere as a concept, the experience of the subject and the in-between space where atmosphere lies, a notion of such ambiguity seems nearly impossible to grasp.

Architects and designers skilfully navigate the task of affecting moods, feelings and behavioural patterns through the material environment. This gives rise to an array of practical, ethical and philosophical questions concerning the role of atmospheres in different spheres of human life. Some of these questions are raised in this chapter in the specific context of old city architecture in times of technological progress and urban development, particularly concerning the critical shifts in urban planning that threaten cultural heritage objects.

Recalling the introduction, we turn to the subject of atmosphere as an affective dimension with certain aspects that may be manipulated with the aim of 'selling' products, events or even places. The impact of such commercial manoeuvres on human behaviour underscores the controversial distinction between experience perceived as authentic and that which ultimately turns out to be synthetic. This is illustrated in an example provided by Bille, Bjerregaard and Sørensen, citing the geographer Tim Edensor, describing the lack of atmosphere at a new Manchester football stadium.¹⁶ The increasingly commercialised

14 Ibid., p. 75.

15 Mikkel Bille, Peter Bjerregaard and Tim Flohr Sørensen, 'Staging Atmospheres: Materiality, Culture, and the Texture of the In-between', *Emotion, Space and Society*, 15 (2015), 31–38 (p. 34).

16 Ibid.

management of football clubs aims to recreate the original experience at matches by generating the proper atmosphere. However, the genuine atmosphere is created in advance as crowds of fans gather prior to the match, even before they enter the stadium, due to the collective energy—the atmosphere—they produce.

Indeed, there is a dense atmospheric tension between the newly designed stadium atmosphere and the atmosphere generated and energetically supported by fans. This absence of the 'specific' and 'matching' atmosphere appears to come not from technological innovation but from simple subterfuge, as LDCs attempt to influence urban planning and commercialise places, launching products and collecting data to support strategic sales mechanisms rather than the well-being of humans and the environment. The rest is affective memory: when people refer to the 'old' times nostalgically, they do not express a longing for the 'old' but for the more vibrant. The sense of place is always marked by time, activated by the presence of the human body—the old stadium' with packed terraces of standing crowds that had the power of stirring a 'dense atmosphere'. Changes and renovations can lead to the attenuation of an environment's natural atmosphere. Furthermore, the 'smart city', a leading concept in contemporary urban planning, is associated with a lack of atmosphere as well as new political dimensions and structures.

In light of these considerations, Böhme's remarks about the pervasive side of atmospheric production are quite insightful. Atmospheres tend to emerge naturally with various qualities, in contrast to conventional presumptions of an established and regulated production process. At the same time, Böhme and his followers approach the practice of 'staging' atmospheres as a historic example of how production can engender experiences of narrative setting, akin to the theatre.

In an article on staging atmospheres, another German philosopher, Peter Sloterdijk, makes a shrewd prediction about increasing attention to atmosphere production in the future. He emphasises that future societies will have to recognise their artificiality, as the majority of things 'must be produced technically, and the metaphorical atmosphere as much as the physical atmosphere'.¹⁷ He claims that atmosphere and

17 Peter Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun nor Death* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2011), p. 245.

sociability have always been manufactured as a collective activity, producing 'a resonance between those who live together'.¹⁸

This leads to the question of the authentic experience of a place. Scholars from various disciplines apply a multiplicity of approaches to investigate atmosphere as a means by which space can transform into a place with a concrete purpose and the potential to influence its inhabitants in different ways. From the historical, urban and phenomenological perspectives, atmospheres broaden the scope of leading paradigms and methods. Collective and individual experience emerge as an exchange between sociality and detachment in people's ability to attune to place.

In Edensor's view, atmospheres tied to the past are far denser than recent ones, possibly due to the density of emotional layers deposited by individuals and events in their temporal context. When the authenticity of human experience coincides with the purpose of a place, it evokes powerful emotions that not only charge the atmosphere but also become embedded in the place itself. The human body, as a threshold for memories, can be easily affected by atmosphere, thus old cities become enveloped by the flickering past and haunting memories.

Understanding the relationships between urban planning, politics and technological innovation is crucial to mitigate the uncertainties and ecological, ethical and political problems that may arise in the near future. Inhabiting and attuning to a space minimally requires having access to 'a space' to inhabit and attune to. In the twenty-first century, space in which to reflect is increasingly scarce. Technological progress, globalisation and the constant flow of information disrupt human rhythms, hindering the ability to react to external stimuli and causing anxiety, depression and detachment. This all stems from the suffocating mechanisms of capitalism that impose product essentiality and technological 'smartness' by selling illusory experiences through staged or technological atmospheres.

18 Ibid., p. 246.



Fig. 12.1 Ortaköy Mosque or Grand Imperial Mosque of Sultan Abdümejid designed in the Neo-Baroque style as an example of a unique atmospheric architectural masterpiece with a distinctive view of the Bosphorus Strait and Bridge connecting the European and Asian parts of the city. Author's photograph, 2021, CC BY-NC-ND.

Thus, the 'smartness' of the environment does not always lead to improvement, and it is crucial to maintain the cultural heritage of cities by protecting the historic centres from total demolition or major reconstructions. In light of the historical roots and concept of atmosphere, it is essential for contemporary architecture and urban practices to embrace atmospheres' potential to create places in the authentic sense of the term, fulfilling purposes beyond consumerism dogmas.

Approaching the Spaces Affectively: Atmospheres of Old City Architecture

All attempts to describe the architecture of the past point to the indomitable quest for a spiritual ideal, which cannot be said for the developmental trajectory of contemporary architecture. However, it is worth noting that architecture is generally dependent on certain practical considerations including era, place, climate, context, technical means, construction materials and the structure's main objective and plan. At the same time, a well-designed architectural construction is always more than a mere material representation of an idea, just as profound works of art always convey something beyond their apparent subject matter or physical essence.

This passage is devoted to the (neo)phenomenological analysis of old city architecture, seeking to uncover the particularities of the architecture's corporeal experience. Initially, the phenomenological project of German philosopher Hermann Schmitz was designed to rediscover the key philosophical principles to revitalise dominant Western European thought beyond the subject-object and mind-body split that arose with works of Plato and René Descartes. In this context, blind spots emerge in the perceptible *Leib* [felt body] and corporeal communication, as well as affective involvements as atmospheres, atmospheric sensoriums, sensory perceptions and other significant situations as well as things. Schmitz focuses on affectively tonalised impressions and emotional states as the basis of spontaneous life experiences, which are considered both objects of study and holistic methods within the theoretical framework of (neo)phenomenology aimed at rediscovering human existence.¹⁹

Schmitz's understanding of space as creating a 'schema' or map that determines location is crucial for the present research. According to him, the focus on the Greek understanding of space and geometry had a substantial impact on how human beings navigate different areas, overlooking the multi-layered, non-Euclidean affective space. Let us briefly examine how Schmitz introduces his atmospheric space theory in order to unveil its significance for architecture and urban planning.

Schmitz identifies *Ortsraum* [locational space], where places, 'mutually determined by the positions and distances of objects situated on them',²⁰ are physically accessible and familiar. The body cannot be defined without using lines and areas in a three-dimensional volume. However, Schmitz goes further in his queries and asserts that there are area-less spaces, providing the examples of sound or weather. According to this idea, the place these spaces occupy is not three-dimensional due to the absence of edges or lines. In this sense, their typology is composed of natural conditions rather than simply psychological or philosophical predispositions that arise from cognitive processes.

19 See Hermann Schmitz, *System der Philosophie: Band III. Der Raum: Teil 2. Der Gefühlsraum* (Bonn: Bouvier, 2005).

20 Hermann Schmitz, 'Atmospheric Spaces', trans. by Margret Vine, *Ambiances* (2016), 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ambiances.711>

There are two neglected yet crucial types of area-less spaces for Schmitz: the felt body space and the affective spaces as atmospheres. The felt body is not a lived body as it may go beyond the skin of one's *Körper* [material body] and can be described without referencing the five senses and the original body schema²¹—the representation of one's physical body, gained from experiential awareness.

Notably, felt bodies can be interconnected incorporeally through a common vitality in the *Einleibung* [en-corporation]—another term Schmitz develops through deriving it from psychology where the term 'encorporation' literally means 'to integrate' something into one's bodily schema—perceivable on one's own felt body and on figures one interacts with or encounters. This notion is of crucial importance because, if Schmitz is correct, then building qualities and characteristics are experienced bodily.

We now turn to Schmitz's notion of atmosphere, central to the present chapter, which does not necessarily address human emotions infused into space but implies a certain affective quality of lived space. Atmospheres are defined as 'area-less space in the sphere of that which is experienced as being present'.²² In this sense, atmospheres of the felt body differ from atmospheres of emotion, buildings and weather. Atmospheres of emotion can either be merely perceived or can move one in a corporeally perceptible way. In this case, they are felt in affective collision as one's own emotions.

'Emotional' space has a separate place in Schmitz's theory, appearing as *Gefühlsraume*—a concept which is criticized²³ for lacking a clear

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- 21 The term was coined by Shaun Gallagher in his work *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Jan Slaby provides a profound distinction between body schema and body image: 'The crucial distinction is the one between body image and body schema. The body image is the conscious image or percept that a person has of her own body—the way the body appears in her perceptual field. The body schema, on the other hand, is the way the body shapes and constrains the perceptual field—this term refers to the structure one's body imposes upon experience'. Jan Slaby, 'Affective Intentionality and the Feeling Body', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 7 (2008), 429–44. See Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 22 Hermann Schmitz, 'Atmospheric Spaces', trans. by Margret Vince, *Ambiances* (2016), 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ambiances.711>, p. 5.
- 23 Jens Soentgen, 'Probleme und Perspektiven der Schmitz'schen Gefühlsphilosophie', *Synthesis Philosophica*, 33 (2018), 343–57, <https://doi.org/10.21464/sp33203>

definition. While this term indeed merits revaluation, the concept itself is beneficial to delineate 'climatic' and affectively charged spaces akin to weather, that 'umstrukturierung der konstellation des gefühlsraums' [restructure the constellation of the emotional space].²⁴ Many of the emotional atmospheres that he describes manifest optically or acoustically. Others are recalled as phantasms that can be haunting, alongside emotions or memories that one never 'sees or hears, not even when visualising them, and which nonetheless move one in a *corporeally* tangible way, such as when without any discernible cause, one is overcome by a sense of happiness or sinks into melancholy or despair'.²⁵

Atmospheres can imbue locational space to the extent that a person can shape their own emotional space from emotions accessed at particular locations. Within an enclosed space, emotions are moulded by the building's qualities, which can be both physically sensed and derived from the object.

On account of this proximity to the felt body, emotions are imprinted on felt-bodies as contours (going beyond the subject-object split) that are endowed with such qualities, just as they move felt bodies. En-corporation allows emotion to be perceived through such contours or to be assimilated by a conscious or unconscious being communicating corporeally as their own emotion. The intentional incorporation of such features into suitably designed objects leads to the formation of atmospheres of emotion within the enclosed space, attuning occupants and/or visitors to these atmospheres. Approaching places experientially, it is impossible to reduce them to a concept defined merely by space, without an embodied focus and bodily dynamics, which would compromise the affectivity. Therefore, we experience places affectively and our bodies, in turn, have the capacity of place orientation, enabling us to act, live and move in a given environment.

Old cities, with their historical sites, boulevards and piazzas, serve as the 'beating heart' of urban structure. They are considered sources of the authentic and dense atmospheres which define cities' unique characters and personalities. For example, religious architecture, a notable feature of this historic fabric, does more than simply fulfil the basic need for shelter from the elements. Rather, they embody the art of capturing

24 Schmitz, *System der Philosophie*, p. 152.

25 Schmitz, 'Atmospheric Spaces', p. 9.

emotional atmospheres and refining them so as to enable individuals to attune in accordance with his or her corporeal mood. Architects, therefore, approach religious constructions to invoke sublime feelings of inspiration. This is what Juhani Pallasmaa calls 'the eternal and unblemished world of beauty'.²⁶

Architectural settings may vary depending on city types and building purposes, just as interior artefacts and elements can exude certain atmospheres. For example, the Gothic masterpiece of Saint Bavo Cathedral in Ghent, Belgium, contains a prominent Ghent altarpiece hidden deep within the heart of the church which radiates a gilded aura and contributes to the site's distinctive atmosphere. More generally, the presence of an archaic Gothic church piercing through an urban landscape not only fosters feelings of a connection with the past and the cosmos, in the Greek sense, but also instils a sense of spirituality and the sublime essence of existence itself. These architectural experiences project our focus and thoughts beyond the utilitarian sphere of building construction and globalised urban processes rooted in capitalistic structures.

For much of the past century, as the need for urban planning alternatives arose from the overpopulated conditions of nineteenth-century industrial cities, the authenticity of old city cultural centres have been called into question. Atmospheres, with their inherent nuance, do not appear viable for contemporary architecture. Commenting on this, Juhani Pallasmaa observes: 'modernity resists tradition, whereas ambience and atmosphere often arise from layering things, particularly a sense of time and deterioration. These are qualities that have been all but erased from the modern conception of aesthetic ideas...'²⁷ Pallasmaa goes on to cite the young architect Alvar Aalto: 'most people, but especially artists, principally grasp the emotional content in a work of art. This is especially manifest in the case of old architecture'.²⁸

26 Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Light, Silence, and Spirituality in Architecture and Art', in *Transcending Architecture. Contemporary Views on Sacred Space*, ed. by Julio Bermudez (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), pp. 19–32 (p. 22), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt130h9f6.7>

27 Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Atmosphere as a Modernist Blind Spot', *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology*, 27 (2016), 3–4 (p. 4), <https://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=eap>

28 Ibid.

The question remains as to how contemporary architects should deal with emotion-laden spaces and how to preserve the atmospheres of old cities—a subject to which we will now turn.

Against Disembodiment: Enactivism and Environmental Humility

The phenomenon of place undoubtedly has deep historical roots, with numerous scholars having approached this theme, including Christian Norberg-Schulz, Edward Casey, Bernd Jäger and Dylan Trigg, among others. Urban design practices, informed by places' practical aims, functionality and qualitative characteristics, have been explored through various methodologies, and the study of emotional architecture from a phenomenological perspective is not at all new. However, the aim to illuminate the salient structures of places using (neo)phenomenology broadens the traditional three-dimensional taxonomy of space by delineating the character of place through the concept of atmosphere.

Emotionally charged spaces can be experienced individually and collectively. Authentic experience is derived from the outside world and, despite our bodily presence in it, is always pre-reflective. Architecture affects us; the environment shapes our being and the way we perceive it. In other words, perception is 'what one does'²⁹ rather than what happens to them. However, when it comes to affect, there is an additional element of being engaged and feeling certain emotions, i.e. the activity of being passive in one's own bodily experience, whether consciously or not. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty noted, the primacy of embodied perception and 'radical reflection'³⁰ provides access to the pre-reflective mode of being. While he did not have the opportunity to prove this idea scientifically, it has since become evident that as the present temporality inhabited by the being, the body is not merely a physical point between past and future, but a transitive process of immediate and mediate memories and projections.

Recent approaches in cognitive science have examined the correlation between the world and cognitive processes. Eleanor Rauch, Francisco

²⁹ Alberto Perez-Gomez, *Attunement* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), p. 195.

³⁰ Cited from *ibid.*, p. 222.

Varela and Evan Thompson introduced the term neurophenomenology in the book *The Embodied Mind* (1991), a major contribution to enactivist theory, which claims that cognitive processes arise through embodied actions in correlation with the environment. Enactive views and embodied perception are focal points for understanding atmosphere and its significance for contemporary urban planning and the preservation of old city atmospheres. Human consciousness, in constant interrelation with and able to attune to the environment, is framed by the city and its architectural settings. At the same time, it is not simply an object that shapes the lives of urban dwellers and their intentions. Hence, intentional actions require both perception and emotion and, as we have seen, bodily engagement.

On one hand, places hold special meanings for their inhabitants, rooted in nostalgic memories of events and situations that transpired within their boundaries and affects spatially diffused into the environment. Although places are bound up with memories, they cannot be reduced to such, given the conscious mind's openness to the external world and one's physical presence in it. 'For all its internal differences, one of the features that define phenomenology's treatment of place is a commitment to the belief that lived spatiality is not a container that can be measured in objective terms, but an expression of our being-in-the-world',³¹ asserts British philosopher Dylan Trigg, following Merleau-Ponty's idea of the correlations between subjects and spaces.³² In this context, being-in-the-world refers to inhabiting a specific location, with all of the bodily particularities integral to finding oneself in that place. This marks the beginning of human experience, where life acquires spatial characteristics.

Trigg develops his own phenomenology of place based on the theory of Merleau-Ponty. He argues that our orientation and experience are fundamentally affective. For example, Trigg describes Merleau-Ponty's journey through Paris, where he experienced the unity in the 'city's whole being'.³³ The style of Paris is not simply perceived through

31 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald Landes (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 293, cited in Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013).

32 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 294.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 328.

its constitutive parts but rather 'there is present a latent significance, diffused throughout the landscape or the city'.³⁴ Notably, this 'style' can also be approached as an atmosphere and explored through its capacity to be grasped by the lived body.³⁵ Merleau-Ponty experiences a continuous line from one place to another, grounded in the 'certain style' of Paris. Thus, the perception of lived space is not a particular cluster of neural connections or simple acts—it is 'the energy with which he tends toward a future through his body and his world'.³⁶ This passage is crucial for Trigg's theory as well as for the present chapter. Merleau-Ponty draws attention to the relationship between one's experience of place and affective states that sculpt that experience, defining places by their affective relationship with their inhabitants. The present study contends that this affectivity emerges as atmosphere.

Within this context, identifying the in-between space where atmospheres are located proves difficult. Although straightforward answers and clear definitions are elusive, certain considerations can delineate its critical features. Our bodies orient us in place, as the means by which we move, dwell and experience the world. In this process, our perception of a given environment proceeds from an embodied grasp of the world. This corporeal correlation reveals place as temporally and spatially singular. Atmosphere occupies the space between wild being, in the Merleau-Pontean sense, and our bodily experience of the environment, with the intelligence of the body enabling the coexistence of body and place. The bodily experience of an unfamiliar place may precede our comprehension due to its pre-reflectivity and initial, nascent feeling. In order to grasp the atmosphere of a place, one must not only be present physically with the spatio-temporal dimensions of one's *Körper* [body] but also possess the capacity within one's lived body to be affected by it. The *Leib* [felt body] is a substrate of *Verspürgen* [immediate feelings] and reflects them in the sphere of the real, physical body. Thus, the in-between is a place rather than being defined in terms of 'orientation toward a point either far away or close by'.

34 Ibid.

35 Joel Krueger, 'Enactivism, Other Minds, and Mental Disorders', *Synthese*, 198 (2019), 365–89, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02133-9>

36 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 330.

If we were to conflate the outer edges of space without situating ourselves on this ambiguous ground, the result would be a rigid determination of place. Such conflation leads to an abstraction of place, producing a sedimented notion that separates place from its otherness. Yet, place is neither fixed nor exact, and before cultural, ethical and sociological judgments are applied, its genesis is a phenomenal appearance in time and space.³⁷

Notably, in-between places cannot be described in terms of Euclidian geometry, occasioning a Schmitzean understanding of space. This implies that places of cultural heritage are not merely historical monuments or ruins; they embody the architecture of memory, directly accessible through our bodies. The experience of place is activated through bodily motion that 'literally absorbs the contours and textures of the environment in the absolute here'.³⁸ Following Trigg's concept, the body initiates insight into something that eventually becomes familiar but, at first glance, carries what he defines as an 'aura of strangeness'.³⁹ Furthermore, Edensor's football stadium example illustrates that atmosphere cannot be understood only through isolated instances extracted from the wider context, as nostalgia is an integral component of the match-day atmosphere, connecting it to the past. Edensor argues that such connections to the past create more potent and concentrated atmospheres.

To purposefully reinforce an atmosphere, one must also move through it. This idea aligns with theories from urban geography and environmental psychology that regard city strolling as an endeavour, exploration and lifestyle. The journey through an old city reveals a pair of binary oppositions—nearness and distance, intimacy and publicity—which, like atmosphere, can be perceived both collectively and individually. Safeguarding cultural heritage objects, such as old towns, religious edifices and architectural ensembles, entails preserving the past embodied in stone and manifested as atmosphere. This is one of the urgent tasks facing contemporary urban planners and architects

37 Trigg, *Memory of Place*, p. 135.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 113. Absolute here is described in this passage as 'the confluence between the place and the physical body through which one catches sight of things in their incipient being visible'.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

and gives rise to the important question of whether the preservation of authenticity is possible during the Anthropocene, amidst late capitalism and technological progress.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the conceptual framework of atmospheres as affectively tonalised environments in order to illuminate the significance of old cities in urban and architectural contexts. This was achieved through the implementation of a (neo)phenomenological approach enriched by enactivist methods.

The first part of the chapter focused on old cities and their preservation amidst rapid globalisation, technological advancement and urban development. Trends in urban renovation and digitalisation are threatening the authenticity and cultural heritage of old cities, requiring a new paradigm for considering the value of cultural heritage and approaches to its preservation. The present research contends that the concept of atmosphere is crucial in developing such a paradigm, as the atmospheric characteristics of old cities are an integral component of local identities and shape how residents and visitors alike experience these urban environments. In this context, the concept of atmosphere, increasingly prominent in spatial arts, urban planning and sound studies, illuminates the affective dimension of old cities as an essential component of urban spaces.

The design of atmosphere is beyond the structural, linguistic and other representational cognitive or language-based approaches, as revealed by the present research. Moreover, the existing theoretical assumptions of many philosophical surveys on atmospheres were found insufficient, prompting a critical examination of these theories through a fresh perspective. Notably, the (neo)phenomenological methods of Schmitz and Böhme, who introduced the concept of feelings as atmospheres, were analysed. These authors are frequently referenced in atmosphere research, yet often without adequately explaining the concept's significance or acknowledging that atmosphere is not merely a tool but a separate dimension with a certain affective quality.

This chapter has analysed potential approaches to atmospheres, particularly in the context of old cities as vanishing elements

of contemporary urban landscapes. Moreover, it has explored environmental and bodily conditions and the possibility of attuning to certain places through enactivism. Examining natural felt bodily dispositions reveals the significance of atmospheres beyond symbolic representations, as spaces that unfold 'in-between' while simultaneously embracing cities in their entirety. Contemporary urban development trends rooted in functionality and neoliberal thinking erode authentic cultural experience, making it imperative to preserve old cities and their atmospheres.

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