EXCURSIONS INTO EVERYDAY SPACES
Mapping Aesthetic Potentiality of Urban Environments
through Preaesthetic Sensitivities

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Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki in auditorium xiv (Main Building, Unioninkatu 34), on the 13th of November, 2015 at 12 o’clock.
Abstract

This study examines the complex relation between spatial experience and aesthetic experience. It is argued that spatial experience specifically in the context of everyday spaces makes it possible to experience them aesthetically as well. A wide selection of research ranging from environmental and philosophical aesthetics to architectural theory, psychology, human geography, and other relevant disciplines is employed in order to achieve a more detailed picture of how spatial experience is formed in the first place. This experience is described mainly in terms of phenomenology but is then related to other ways of understanding experiences and their prerequisites.

Different notions of space and spatiality and a more comprehensive articulation of the relation of perception to spatial experience, sensory perception, and how senses contribute to spatial experience are in the focus of attention at the beginning of the study. Different experiential layers that can be distinguished within the space which is closest experienced are explored. Interaction with environment is discussed and the notion of preaesthetic is presented to clarify the relation between the two different types of experiences. Following this, the notion of preaesthetic is studied against eminent notions such as aesthetic attitude and aesthetic engagement that show elements that have traditionally been considered to either lead to or define aesthetic experiences.

This study shows that the effect that spatial experience has on revealing aesthetic potentialities in everyday environments is far more complicated than has previously been understood. Due to its contingent qualities, spatial experience sometimes leads to “failed” aesthetic experiences even in situations where there is obvious aesthetic potentiality. Even though there are some overlapping qualities in spatial and aesthetic experiences, they cannot thus be equated, as has more or less been done in different branches studying the topics of art and architectural experiences, for example. In the final part of the study, some possible directions for future research are pointed out and the application possibilities of these new developments in aesthetic theory are presented by short case studies, in which a closer look is taken into a chosen set of urban everyday spaces.
Acknowledgments

Now, only in retrospect, is it possible to see that the starting point of this journey can be traced back 15 years to the moment when I took the train one last time to Helsinki Central railway station. That was when I started both my studies in aesthetics and a relationship with the city as its inhabitant. The urban setting morphed into the sphere of my everyday, a spatio-temporal continuation of lived moments interwoven into a web of memories and future experiences in-the-making. In many ways, all this is a reminder that there is no escaping one’s past – the only choice is to let it return in different patterns within opportunities that life offers plenty of.

My deep gratitude goes to my supervisor Prof. Arto Haapala for believing in me and my project, and for helping me to find ways to make things work. His gentle but determined style of supervising has left enough room for me to find my own voice and style. This I believe to be crucial for someone immersing oneself in the study of aesthetics.

I wish to thank my fellow researchers at the University of Helsinki with whom I have shared many memorable moments in different phases of this process: Dr. Hanne Appelqvist, Prof. Kaisa Broner-Bauer, Petteri Enroth, Dr. Saara Hacklin, Dr. Martta Heikkilä, Ari Korhonen, Petteri Kummala, Lecturer Leena Laiho, Veera Launis, Tarja Rannisto, Jani Vanhala, and Dr. Janne Vanhanen. Special thanks go, of course, to Dr. Kalle Puolakka for being always first and foremost a friend with whom I have had the pleasure of sharing adventures in the academic world ever since entering the university.

My heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Juha-Pekka Liljander and Anja Kuhalampi from the Lahti branch of University of Helsinki for being reliable supporters of my project and enabling its realisation. Many thanks for collegial support to my fellow researchers during the Lahti years: Dr. Riikka Puhakka, Anu-Liisa Rönkä, Dr. Karoliina Ojanen, and Anna Kouhia. I wish to thank the whole former “Luovis” team for having provided an environment bubbling with positive energy positivity.

I am also grateful to Prof. Harri Veivo for support in the initial phases of my path towards a Ph.D. Later on, Docent and Lecturer Oiva Kuisma and Docent
and Lecturer Max Ryynänen have both been very encouraging, and I have had the pleasure of their company on many of my conference travels. I also very much appreciate the advice and support given by Prof. Pauline von Bonsdorff, Prof. Sirpa Tani, and Prof. P. T. Karjalainen on different occasions.

I wish to extend my gratitude to my old workplace, Amos Anderson Art Museum, and its Director Kai Kartio together with many former colleagues working there. I worked there as an undergraduate and when initially drafting this research project. The particular space of the old museum premises is where many of my thoughts regarding spatial experience started to formulate. Special thanks to my fellow Amos colleague and art historian Oscar Ortiz-Niemenen for kindly sharing his extensive knowledge on church architecture.

Aesthetics is a small discipline in Finland, but internationally it collects together a large and fascinating group of people doing research on different branches of the field. From the beginning of my career, I have been fortunate enough to travel and meet many wise and wonderful colleagues to share experiences with. Thank you for your support, advice, and friendship: Dr. Luiza Cent, Dr. Malgosia Trzeciak, Dr. Ana Rita Ferreira, and Dr. Angela Kun. My Nordic colleagues hold a special place in my heart; thank you especially Dr. Anna-Lena Carlsson and Dr. Brit Strandhagen, together with many others from the Nordic Society of Aesthetics. I also wish to use the opportunity to thank Prof. Bente Larsen and participants of her seminar in Paris for including me in their delightful company at the very final stages of writing the manuscript. I benefited especially from Vendela Grundell and Trude Talette Simonsen’s close reading and insightful comments on the last chapter of this book. Thank you also to Dr. Matthew Pelowski and Dr. Luise Reitstätter for kindly sharing their research results.

I am also in gratitude to Prof. Arnold Berleant, Prof. Allen Carlson, Prof. Yrjö Sepänmaa, and Prof. Cheng Xiangzhan for their support and advice at different phases of my PhD studies. I feel honoured to have had the opportunity to make acquaintance with so many world-renowned scholars in World Congresses (2010 Beijing and 2013 Krakow) and wish to thank the International Association of Aesthetics for choosing me as one of the receivers of the Young Scholar Award in 2013.
My pre-examiners, Prof. Andrew Ballantyne and DDr. Mădălina Diaconu, made numerous useful comments to the manuscript of which I am most grateful and have made according changes to my best capacity. I wish to thank Prof. Michael Lucas for helping me to clarify some architectural definitions and for pointing out some good examples of the use of different kinds of spaces. Thank you also to Dr. Mark Shackleton for the English revision of the manuscript. Many thanks go to Galerie Forsblom, Ihme Contemporary Art Festival, and Raumlabor Berlin for giving me a permission to use their photos.

This work was started with the financial support from Finnish Cultural Foundation and University of Helsinki Funds. Most of the net time of 4 years and 4 months of my research has been done at the International Institute of Applied Aesthetics during the time when it belonged to the now defunct Lahti Unit of Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Helsinki. The II AA with its roots firmly in environmental aesthetics has provided me with a deep sense of belonging, and I am happy that the story of my PhD is now a part of its history as well. Last but not least, it has been crucial to the development of my thought to test many of the ideas presented here in international conferences: these travels have been funded by travel grants of the Chancellor of University of Helsinki, Cultural Ministry of Spain, and Centre franco-norvégien en sciences sociales et humaines (Paris).

This work was realised with unwavering support of friends and family, and for that I am forever grateful; thank you especially Karoliina, Johanna, Terhi, Sanna & families. I wish to dedicate this book with utter love to my own family: Janne, Kaspar, and our little Lotte, who was born exactly 3 weeks after the manuscript was finished. Thank you for being patient with me.

One gets so easily attached to a work of this scale and would wish to continue to keep on polishing it. However, it is time to let go now, enjoy the results, and give space for new paths to open up in life.

Helsinki 12.10.2015
Sanna Lehtinen
Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgments ......................................................................................................................... vi

Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 1

I Spatiality and Environmental Aesthetics ..................................................................................... 13
    Space over Place – An Aesthetic Approach ............................................................................. 15
    Space Implicit in the Notion of Environment ....................................................................... 22
    Non-Human Perspectives on Spatial Experience .................................................................. 24
    Lived and Experienced Space ................................................................................................. 28

II Body, Senses, and Spatial Experience ....................................................................................... 33
    Vision as a Spatial Sense ......................................................................................................... 37
    Haptic Perception and Communication .................................................................................. 42
    Acoustic Perception of Space .................................................................................................. 45
    Smell and Taste in Relation to Spatiality ............................................................................... 50
    Proprioceptive and Interoceptive Senses ............................................................................... 54
    Bodily Awareness ..................................................................................................................... 57
    Somatic Experience and Pleasure .......................................................................................... 61
    Moving in Space ....................................................................................................................... 64

III Personal, Private, and Intimate Space ..................................................................................... 68
    Personal Space ........................................................................................................................ 69
    Private Space ............................................................................................................................ 74
    Intimate Space .......................................................................................................................... 77
    Personal, Private, and Intimate Spaces in Everyday Environments ......................................... 79
    Spaces Created by Light ........................................................................................................... 82
    Mood and Atmosphere ............................................................................................................. 88

IV Embodied and Engaged Interaction with the Environment ..................................................... 91
    Location of the Body and Directions in Space ...................................................................... 94
    Altered States of Experiencing Space, Direction, and Movement .......................................... 98
Introduction

The rapidly increasing size of the human population\(^1\) and its recent concentration in metropolitan areas\(^2\) is forcing us to reconsider the value of space and its role in human experience and in relations between people. The consequences of the process called urbanisation have mainly been considered a socio-economical issue as well as a practical problem concerning different planning practices. However, dense living conditions and the choices that determine a person’s well-being in urbanised environments and otherwise crowded settings call for other kinds of research approaches as well. One might ask why is this a relevant problem for the branch of philosophy called aesthetics that is still most commonly associated with questions concerning art and the beautiful. On a larger scale, my aim is to reinforce the idea that aesthetic issues can positively contribute to discussions concerning the quality of life, not only for the privileged or as a fine-adjustment in lives already full of possibilities for extraordinary experiences, but in a way

\(^1\) “A world of 7 billion is both a challenge and an opportunity with implications on sustainability, urbanization, access to health services and youth empowerment. It also offers a rare call-to-action to renew the global commitment for a healthy and sustainable world for all.” (http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/7Billion); According to recent estimates the world population will increase to between 9.6 and 12.3 billion in 2100, see Gerland & al. 2014.

\(^2\) “As of 2010, for the first time in history, over half the world’s population lives in cities” (WEF 2014, 9). “By 2030 70 percent of the world’s population will live in cities.” Also the number of megalopolises with over 10 million inhabitants is estimated to be over 30 by the year 2025 (World Resources Institute, Building Efficiency Initiative).
that can be of profit to anyone.

Both on the macro and micro levels, the space allotted to a person is dependent on many constantly changing factors. Aesthetics here is one means by which it is possible to explain how a person experiences and acknowledges his or her environment and participates in activities taking place in it. It allows for an interesting perspective into a deepening relationship and sensory, emotional, as well as aesthetic engagement with the existing surroundings. Instead of confining aesthetic matters to the analysis of the strictly defined sphere of art or to the thoroughly planned environments of the traditional Western countries, aesthetics is and should be seen as a key element in understanding the everyday experience of people living in extremely diverse conditions around the globe. Life without aesthetic sensibility, if even imaginable, can be likened to living without one or some of the traditional five senses. The increasing awareness of the sensuous qualities and their cognitive, emotional, and ethical repercussions is an important quest within the field of aesthetics. This dissertation hopefully contributes in a minor way to the parameters of this quest by further exploring some of the concepts that describe the human experience of space.

How different kinds of spaces affect our well-being and relations to others might seem like a question which has already been answered in numerous ways. Manifold explanations have come from different perspectives and fields of research. Our relation to the surrounding space with objects and other people within it is, however, such a multifaceted issue that it still seems to have many unexplored sides to it. New connections are to be made between the functioning of the human sensory apparatus with its biological basis and the more complex forms of experience and their relation to the concrete space around us. As Arnold Berleant concedes, the “setting of one’s life has a powerful influence on the character of its content, indeed, on its very quality and possibilities”. From the perspective of environmental aesthetics, understanding the complex relation to this setting is thus vital.

The central theme of this study is the relation between spatial experience

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3 Berleant 1992, xii.
and aesthetic experience. Or more precisely, the question can be specified to concern how the experience of space affects aesthetic experiences. In most cases and when thinking with common sense it seems to deeply affect the experience but in ways that are difficult to articulate. However, more than that, the claim being developed here is that it is precisely the spatial experience that enables the aesthetic experience to take place in the first place. It can thus be considered a prerequisite for aesthetic experience, something that is best seen in those cases where the aesthetic experience “fails” due to the effects of the spatial conditions. These failed, quite common, uncomfortable, and challenging situations are revelatory in the sense that they open up the scope of the relation between these two different types of experiences that, however, have a strong connection.

Spatial experience functions in a somewhat different register than aesthetic experience. Shifting from simply gathering somatic impulses towards more sophisticated cognitive forms of experience has traditionally been considered possible only for human beings. In any case, the sentient basis of human experiential nature has through both empirical research and developments in philosophical thought become ever clearer. The relatively recent approach of evolutionary aesthetics is tentatively taken into consideration in this thesis, since it offers some important tools for a better understanding of the very basic models of perception and also a wider temporal perspective to understanding the context of human behaviour in different environments. However, it seems obvious that a more extensive network of theories is required in order to understand how human beings perceive their surroundings and the ways the initial sensations turn into more complex forms of experience.

The concept of space has been surprisingly little discussed in aesthetics. However, a certain experiential concept of space is still clearly assumed even when it is not articulated. It is implicitly present in many descriptions of aesthetic experience, for example. This is most obvious in different kinds of descriptions of aesthetic experience and qualities related to art objects and environments. Spatial experiences become manifested in how surroundings are understood and in what kinds of settings they offer for aesthetic experiences.

Motivating this kind of study on topics concerning “extra-aesthetic” factors
in aesthetic experiences requires the inquiry to expand to other fields than traditional philosophical aesthetics. A selection of these fields has thus been taken into account in order to deal with the different perspectives concerning the topic. An attempt at a multidisciplinary approach is very much present here even though, still today, it does not always seem to be favoured by research practices. An attempt to create a certain synthesis between different approaches is inevitable in order to truly assess human experiences. These different registers complement each other and together assist in creating a more balanced view of how the topic of spatial experience has been approached.

Environmental aesthetics offers one important framework for this kind of research, since it has recently been expanded to take into account more and more of that which surrounds sentient human beings. Its approach seems most fruitful and least obscuring in assessing the relevance of spatial experience to aesthetic experiences. Far from being interested only in the phenomena of the natural environment, environmental aesthetics has expanded to include man-made environments, such phenomena as art, design, and, to some extent, important aspects of everyday and social life. Started as a branch of environmental aesthetics, the social aesthetics of Arnold Berleant has been in my mind for a while as a very important subfield of aesthetics that still requires more advancing. To offer one example, how the spatial aspects of everyday life affect forming and conditioning of the aesthetic sphere implicit in social relationships has not yet been thoroughly assessed.

After a very brief introductory historical summary on the general definitions of how space has been understood, the emphasis shifts towards experiential modes of defining space. The descriptions of how space is experienced are often to be found in fragments and parentheses. This is by no means an attempt to collect together everything that has been written about spatial experience. Instead, I focus on collecting certain complementary lines of thought that together form a basis for understanding spatial experiences. Existing philosophical literature on spatial experience has mostly phenomenological inquiry as a starting point. Martin Heidegger’s notion of dwelling has traditionally been the origin of many subsequent inquiries into some version of spatial experience.
However, Otto Bollnow’s detailed account of the spatiality of human life presented in his *Human Space* (*Mensch und Raum*, 1963, transl. 2011) provides this study with the general understanding of space and how it is experienced. Bollnow relies on Heidegger for some starting points, but soon departs from them in order to develop his views on the character of space and its experiential quality. Central here is thus the lived experience of space as well as the reflective awareness of this experience and some of the ways both the experience and awareness of it relate to aesthetic experiences. It is also worth keeping in mind that reflective awareness highlights some aspects of the lived experience but is unable to assess the totality of the experience.

The space that is most immediately experienced is called here intimate space or personal space depending on its context, measure, and use. I go through some of the most common ways of defining and describing this space. It can be stated to experientially exist, even though clear boundaries or final definitions are difficult to make. Mostly it is seen in the effects of objects or other people at close range. To some extent this space is also obviously culturally defined. In these purposes, this research coincides with some basic questions in anthropology or human geography. Other fields of research relevant to some degree are social aesthetics, animal aesthetics, and even the aesthetics of technology. Also applied fields such as organizational studies that stem from sociology and phenomenology of architecture have left their mark in understanding space defined as intimate or personal.

The scope of my study bears a relation to some of the focal points of human geography. This connection becomes apparent on multiple occasions throughout the study. However, the differences in approach of human geography and aesthetics also become clear as spatial experience is linked more explicitly to aesthetic experience. The relation between them has for a long time been an implicit one, and has not been addressed directly enough. I claim that this is because the topic of spatial experience in this relation is considered to be too obvious; it is, however, a very difficult one to grasp conceptually. Breaking

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4 Henri Bergson treats time similarly, as *duration* (*durée*). See Bergson 2001.
through the disciplinary boundaries has not been my aim as such. The approach could be termed more like a nonchalant negligence of so-called boundaries in favour of the topic at hand. Interdisciplinary research in this field would need a whole chapter, if not a dissertation of its own, but I hope from my point of view to be able to nudge the field and discussions towards a broader and more inclusive position.

My goal here is to also address situations where the experience of space does not allow for the aesthetic experience to take place. What kinds of spaces hinder the aesthetic qualities of environment from fully unfolding? What exactly happens in these kinds of situations? The spaces that allow for aesthetic experiences to take place or even encourage them seem more readily apprehensible. I come to the conclusion that spatial experience moulds our overall experience to such an extent that it must be given proper consideration, no matter how internalized it has become through habituation and the repetitive nature of many of these experiences, especially those belonging to the sphere of the everyday. Following Bollnow, the emphasis here is on the concrete, physical spatial ramifications of everyday spaces and thus on the uncharted sensations and reflex-like reactions they evoke. Instead of psychologising these phenomena they must be tackled by philosophical reflection that better takes into consideration the complex prerequisites of human experience.

Especially from the point of view of aesthetics, museum and art gallery spaces are probably among the most obvious and traditional examples of how spatial design directly affects aesthetic experiences. They can, at best, enhance and thus support the art that is exhibited. In many unfortunate cases the spaces themselves can negatively affect the experience of visitors, hindering them from forming any successful relation with the artworks presented. From art that we encounter in museums or galleries, environmental art and architecture, to the most common everyday actions such as commuting, homemaking, or grocery shopping, the way we relate to space varies accordingly. However, there is always something permanent present regarding how space is experienced in these diverse situations. Something in the overall stance towards the surrounding space stays mostly the same, even if the level of attunement varies. In the scope of this
study I address these traditional art-related spatial experiences that take place in museum and gallery spaces only briefly under the notion of *institutionalised aesthetic experiences*. In the context of everyday aesthetics they are compared with aesthetic experiences that are ignited by everyday environments. In the final chapter, I also present some examples of how installing artworks into these everyday environments can help to reassess their experiential spatial qualities.

One of the more general goals of this study is that the results would be applicable to a wide variety of regions of human life in which aesthetic experience plays a part. The subjective side of experience is central but so too is a more general notion of space as a contingent, experiential factor in making the aesthetic experience possible in the first place. Everyday life in general is perforated with different aspects of the aesthetic. These everyday aesthetic potentialities are taken as a given to the extent that it is very difficult to discern their effect from central processes such as decision-making or value formation. The aesthetic is more apparent in the traditional sense in such end results of realized aesthetic potentialities as legitimated aesthetic appreciation or judgments on beauty, for example. The so-called flow or sublime experiences have a different relation to the notion of the aesthetic than more vague or trivial states, such as simply having a good feeling about something or considering something “cool”.

Some parts of this study belong to the vast and uncharted sphere of applied aesthetics, and some contribute in a more fundamental way to the branch of philosophical aesthetics. Yet this kind of demarcation is becoming more and more difficult or even irrelevant in today’s world of research with pressing practical problems needing as broad a horizon as possible in order to be solved. It is worth keeping in mind that, as Berleant reminds us, “all aesthetics is, in a sense, applied”.\(^5\) The immediacy and closeness to that which continuously surrounds us and which is continuously perceived is what makes aesthetics so compelling, but also makes its role and meaning difficult to discern. This prospect and the need to apply aesthetics with its countless possibilities has recently widened to a remarkable degree. It seems by now that the enlarging scope of everyday

\(^5\) Berleant 1992, xii.
aesthetics is beginning to correspond to the demand explicitly stated by Wolfgang Welsch, among many others:

[A]esthetics has to be broadened beyond questions of art to daily life, perceptive attitudes, media culture, and the ambivalence of aesthetic – and anaesthetic – experience.⁶

In addition to this mission of probing into the sphere of everyday experience, it is also the dimension of these perceptive attitudes and the phases of experiences they affect that I aim to describe here.

In accordance with the complexity of the subject, the multiplicity and openness of experiences are actively kept in mind. Writing about extremely subjective, yet at the same time to shared experiences, requires much consideration and some simplifications in order to make the whole pursuit even remotely possible. Extrapolating the multitude of experiences under a common nominator is, however, worth the effort since I believe that there is something in the descriptions of these experiences that resonates with most people.

The problem of accuracy in dealing with experiences is one to take seriously, especially since these experiences are also linked to the temporal dimension and other, often irregular aspects of human life. Experiences change and after being effectuated, they keep on changing, as they become memories and components in other experiences. Manifested in many forms, remembered, retold, re-remembered, questioned, and emphasised differently, any experience is bound to become emblematic and even idealised in order to last the test of time. Coexistence of contradictory elements in every experience makes a multitude of interpretations and follow-up directions possible.

In order to start, it is necessary to briefly introduce the contents and aims of each of the six chapters of this study. In Chapter I, I go briefly through the most prominent notions of space and thus also point out some misconceptions that go along with them. By moving swiftly to assessing what these notions of space mean specifically in the context of aesthetics, I clear the ground for further exploration into the nature of spatial experience as it is most often

⁶ Welsch 1997, ix.
made possible by urban everyday settings. By introducing the perspective of evolutionary aesthetics to an understanding of space I wish to make room for a more inclusive set of approaches. The elements of spatial experience start to unfold as I go through the detailed analysis of lived and experienced space outlined by Bollnow with notions that support this type of description from other writers, such as Yi-Fu Tuan.

Chapter II is dedicated to the senses and to descriptions of how they function and are affected when perceiving space. Tracing the multisensory experience back to different traditionally separated senses might seem a somewhat conservative approach for the overall scope of this study. This division has a simple heuristic motivation, however, included here in order to better tackle the somewhat cryptic notion of “multisensoriness”, and also to make clear its usefulness in the context of everyday aesthetics.

The notions of personal, private, and intimate spheres of space are taken into use to describe some registers that are present in spatial experiences in Chapter III. These notions do not originate from philosophical aesthetics, but are brought into the discussion as tools to help in understanding the complicated nature of spatial experience and also to contextualise it in different types of human environments and situations of everyday life.

Chapter IV continues to tackle the relation between an individual and his or her environment by presenting a slightly different angle. I do this by explicitly bringing into focus the fairly recent embodiment approach to the extent that it is relevant to the notion of experience in this study. Similarly, as in the case of evolutionary aesthetics, I find the embodiment approach an increasingly important addition to the discussion, partly because it originates from a background that is somewhat distinct from traditional aesthetics. Towards the end of the chapter, the focus moves towards different environment-bound aesthetic experiences, themed under the notions of institutionalised, sublime, and interaction-related, aesthetic experiences, thus already preliminarily approaching the topic of the next chapter.

In Chapter V the main focus is on aesthetic experience, since the spatial nature of aesthetic experiences has not been sufficiently clarified. As I have already emphasised, it is, however, implicitly assumed to exist in close relation
to aesthetic experiences themselves. The notion of preaesthetic is brought into the discussion in order to test whether it can provide us with a definition of a certain phase of experience that would cover spatial experiences as well as other similar experiences paving the way to aesthetic experiences. In this chapter aesthetic engagement, aesthetic attitude, and attention are also discussed to the extent that they provide an insight into assessing the role of preaesthetic experiences. The processes leading to negative aesthetic experiences together with the possibility of aesthetic alienation are also probed in this sense.

The final chapter is dedicated to more concrete examples and descriptions of actual urban spatial and aesthetic experiences. The focus is on their relation but by doing this, one cannot avoid venturing a little further into describing some of the essential features of contemporary urban experience. Helsinki Central railway station is given prominence as it represents an intriguing juxtaposition of old school architectural grandeur and contemporary everyday commuter culture. By this example and a few other minor ones, I aim to show also how varied experiences are bound to each other in a necessarily intermingled way in the innate complexity of city space.

Instead of tackling only the old, binding notions of art or architecture, I take it as granted and as a starting point that the aesthetic is related to the human condition through a much wider contact surface. I thus take directly as my starting point the relatively recent advances that have taken place under the title of environmental aesthetics and that of everyday aesthetics. From these perspectives, aesthetics as a sensory knowledge is returning to its origins. Aesthetics is most commonly defined as a branch of philosophy concerned with the notions of beauty, art, and taste. However, aesthetic experience has recently been considered to have a wider effect on the scale of the everyday as well as in phenomena ranging from politics to complex social issues. Having been mainly art-centred for quite some time, aesthetics has been brought back to its roots as a science of sensory experience, but with the incremental knowledge that has been gained ever since Baumgarten’s first outline of the discipline: “Aesthetics – theory of liberal arts, inferior gnosology, art of thinking beautifully, art of
the analogue to reason – is the science of perception.” This original notion of aesthetics that established the discipline has recently received the re-evaluation it deserves. Obviously, many of these newly-presented issues have been under investigation previously under different names. The developments spanning from Baumgartian aesthetics to contemporary notions of the aesthetic with their many ramifications seem like a long stretch, but are instead a fairly logical progression with many converging points.

Approaching aesthetic sensibility and sensitivity primarily as a spatial issue is seen in this study as part of a more fundamental discussion of the role of aesthetics. It seems obvious by now that the leap from the aesthetic to the ethical is not as big as it is often considered to be. Aesthetic value and moral value have long been kept separate on partly artificial grounds. This has led to problems in both separate directions. In the ecologically conscious world of today it is relevant to expose these artificialities that work against solving some very concrete problems. For example, moral beauty in the sense of living a well-balanced life of morally acceptable actions might in many occasions contribute directly to aesthetic beauty in the form of the consequences of many small decisions that take place in one’s everyday life. On the other hand, this relation is not always clear and sometimes these moral and aesthetic values are in dire conflict.

The human being’s way of being in the world is aesthetic in the deepest sense. We come into contact with the world first and foremost through the senses. The sensory apparatus and mechanisms of perception that are tied to the bodily experience define the way the world is apprehended and determine to a certain extent what meanings are attached to different phenomena. The notion of “the aesthetic” has from the beginning referred to this sensory basis of the relation with the world. The sensory distinctions implicit in the notion of the aesthetic have multiplied as a result of the expansion of the field of where aesthetic interest is directed. It seems that a single notion of the aesthetic no longer serves the purposes of aesthetic inquiry anymore. Yet the core reference to the science of sensory knowledge seems as relevant and current as ever. Multiplied meanings

7 Baumgarten 2007, 10 (§1).
8 See Wallenstein 2013.
only highlight the importance of constant work on definitions and also on assessing the boundaries and overlapping with other concepts and fields of study.

Environmental aesthetics has clearly contributed to the reappraisal of aesthetics as sensory knowledge instead of the emphasis being solely on philosophy of art. The work of such thinkers as Berleant, Yuriko Saito, and Wolfgang Welsch, just to name a few eminent proponents, enlarge the scope of aesthetics into a significantly more inclusive direction.

The qualitative character of sensory experiences has not gone unnoticed in different branches of aesthetic studies. My project concentrates on one important part that is included in the field of aesthetics. Not only the experience of space but also the attitudes, relations, and reactions to this experience and the practical consequences that follow from them are under scrutiny. This is done in order to better understand spatiality from an experientially holistic point of view.

Within the scope of the human sensorium and the possibilities implied with it, there exist underestimated and understudied capacities that can be turned into positive capabilities. This leads towards an overall understanding of the human condition and possible improvement in the scope of human agency. They require a deep and detailed understanding of how human beings relate with each other and their environment. Aesthetic factors, among others, play a role here and not simply as a pure embellishment of human life.

My main literature comes from the field of environmental aesthetics. It is contextualised and given a wider view of the larger questions in the background by mixing relevant readings from the fields of anthropology, architectural theory, art, history, and psychology of perception, just to name the most relevant ones. The approach is explicitly phenomenological, yet determinedly open to other perspectives that complement, widen, and also challenge this starting point. Towards the end, this study also reveals another purpose: that of preliminarily describing some of the spatial and experiential components that contribute to good quality in relation to urban experiences. In the context of environmental aesthetics it is common to take part in the discussion on aesthetic well-being and assess the contributions of a wide variety of different planning and design activities from a qualitative perspective.
I Spatiality and Environmental Aesthetics

When approaching the issue of spatiality from the perspective of environmental aesthetics, several questions concerning their relation are of relevance. One has to ask, for example, how our experience and conceptualisation of the space that surrounds us and that we are a part of, helps in understanding the aesthetic possibilities that reside in the very same space. I start by making a short revision of some of the most common ways of understanding the concept of spatiality and then move on to consider more closely how they are reflected in aesthetic inquiry. Since there obviously exists a vast number of different definitions of space and spatiality depending on context and purpose, I have focused on those that can be considered most relevant for understanding how the aesthetic manifests itself in particular everyday environments.

Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s discussion of spatial experience provides an illuminating starting point for looking at how space and spatiality in general is experienced. In accordance with phenomenological principles Tuan puts “emphasis on the direct, intimate experience”, which has as its opposite the “indirect, conceptual experience, mediated by symbols”.9 The intimate experience related to the functioning of the senses is thus juxtaposed with conceptual knowledge. The vagueness of spatial experience is directly related to the multiplicity and

9 Tuan 2008, 6.
relationality of spatial qualities. Yet the main questions to be considered more closely are: in what ways is space exactly experienced, what are these layers of experience, and to what extent are they distinguishable from one another?

Experiences in general can be vaguely approached as being composed of three different factors: sensation, perception, and conception. In a way, they reach out towards the external world. This necessarily directs the experience beyond the self. Emotions also have an indisputable effect on experience that cannot be escaped. Feeling and emotion are more ambiguous by nature and thus the passivity of experience can be disputed in this context. Experiences are often considered to be passive in nature in the sense that they are something that happens to someone. However, movement in space, for example, obviously makes spatial experiences decisively more active. One can actively affect one’s experience-in-the-making by changing location or position and so changing some of the overall parameters of the experience. This kind of understanding of spatiality in the experiential sphere requires a somewhat unconventional approach to defining space and spatiality.

When approaching the topic of spatial experience, one has to remember, that as such, experience in general “implies the ability to learn from what one has undergone”. This opens up a completely new perspective to the understanding of everyday experiences, of which both spatial and aesthetic are under scrutiny here. When seen as expressing the previously learned or as learning opportunities which lead to habit formation, the value and meaning of these experiences become ever more prominent. One can ask whether it is possible to learn from spatial experience and in what ways does this learning change the experiential sphere in exchange. Does this specific spatial learning simply mean getting to know the space, becoming familiarised with it? Or perhaps it has wider repercussions with other types of experiences or factors in them. Keeping up with learning new ways of using, deciphering, and processing information captured and transmitted by the senses is certainly important in this sense.

Getting a glimpse of the spatial paradigms of different fields and disciplines is important in order to understand their differing or sometimes overlapping
approaches. Urban planning, architectural theory, social and behavioural sciences, sociology, anthropology, communication studies, and psychology in particular, have all in their turn shared an interest in spatial experiences. Even within branches labelled as applied sciences, such as health and sport sciences, some relatively new approaches – health care, nursing, and sports embodiment studies for example – give important and practice-based insight into matters regarding how space is individually experienced. It is not possible within the extent of this thesis to evaluate what can be learnt from all of these approaches. But I find it important to remind oneself of those differing implications not only to evoke some parallels with the aesthetic approach but also to explore complementary and enriching views on how space affects human beings and their experiences of their environments.

Space over Place – An Aesthetic Approach

In *Timaeus*, describing the formation of the universe Plato defines *khora* as an interval or as a receptacle, which gives space.11 There exist different interpretations of the notion of khora, but according to some, it already refers to space “in the sense of gap, scope, distance”.12 On the other hand, in order to be fully understood, “khora” as space should be contrasted to the concept of “topos”, generally translated as place or location. The distinction between these two already echoes the longstanding differentiation between space and place.13 In the fourth book of his *Physics*, Aristotle in turn juxtaposes “topos”, place, with “chronos”, time. According to Aristotle, at least two of the four elements – fire, air, water and earth – are linked to directions in space: up, down, in front, behind, right, left. This, according to Aristotle, is in evidence since fire always keeps rising upwards.

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11 Continental philosophers such as Heidegger, Kristeva, Lacan, and Derrida have since adopted the notion each to their own use.
12 Plato, *Timaeus* 52a8, d3; Bollnow 2011, 30. See also Zeyl 2010. For comparisons between classical Greek and Arabic conceptions of space, see e.g. El-Bizri 2010.
13 See e.g. El-Bizri 2011.
whereas earth falls down towards the ground. On the other hand, directions are related to human beings and their changing positions. On a larger scale Aristotle’s accounts aim at showing that everything which exists in space has a natural place of its own.

Ever since ancient times, an especially long and varied history of definitional dichotomies concerning space has been building up. From the perspective of the history of ideas, the understanding of spatiality has long been divided into two distinct strands. Descartes’s “esprit de géométrie” can be contrasted with Pascal’s spiritual or existential notion of the frightening eternal silences of infinite spaces. From the perceptual point of view, notions of the sphere of spatial experiences have traditionally been strongly delineated by the Western emphasis on ecularcentrism. Spatiality on a grander scheme was affected by the realisation of the round form of the world and its relation to other cosmic objects. This also affected the overall framework of actually experiencing spatiality on a smaller scale. With the work of Newton in physics, the concept of space was enlarged from Aristotelian finite boundaries to that of open, unlimited, “absolute space”. For Newton, motion became a tool to understand the change of location within this space, since space is considered to have a geometrical structure of three-dimensional Euclidean space. With the notion of absolute space, grasping space became dependent on coordinates located within it, and thus it became a relational space.

Spatiality was further explored during the 20th century by different forming fields of science in a way that sparked more philosophically and practically oriented insights. For example, early contributions by physicist-philosopher Ernst Mach assisted in understanding the separation of physiological space from geometrical space as well as advanced studying of such individualised spatial notions as movement perception and sense of balance. Yet it was Einstein’s general theory of relativity that bound time and space together so that they were

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16 Pascal 2001, 42 (Pensées no. 206).
17 Maudlin 2012, 5.
18 See e.g. Pojman 2011 and Ganchrow 2010.
no longer defined as pure opposites. This shift in focus to “spacetime” is relevant for the whole study at hand; experiential space cannot be imagined without the aspect of temporality. Modern science has thus been crucial in defining and conceptualising space. Physics in general introduces space as a geometrical structure through its central concepts, such as mass and materiality. Space has been given instrumental value and the experiential aspects have then been assumed to follow this process of naturalised instrumentalisation of a concept. However, this central notion of mathematical and geometrical space has at times inevitably been in stark contrast with experienced and bodily space.

The notion of space became central in late 20th-century thought in a very wide and inclusive sense. This is seen in phenomena as diverse as the Situationist International movement or the “spatial turn” that took place in social sciences, for example. Many thinkers, such as Michel Foucault, David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Soja developed concepts to explain spatiality in new and illuminating ways. These fairly recent developments started challenging the older paradigms of how space in experiential contexts is understood. For example, Cartesian space mediated by vision became contrasted with Lefebvrian space, which takes into consideration temporal aspects with the rhythms that space innately creates.

Henri Lefebvre also attached the notion of production to that of space and following this lead, Doreen Massey among others has argued for understanding space as “an open ongoing production”. This production or spatialisation perspective emphasises seeing space as a field between many, often conflicting political and social forces that affect spatial practices and perceptions. It seems, however, that the role and experience of an individual in other senses than as a member of a larger group seems less clear according to these sorts of views.

The concepts of space and place are taken for granted to a large extent both in everyday language and research, but what exactly is their relation? They clearly

19 See e.g. Warf & Arias 2008.
20 See El-Bizri 2010. For Martin Heidegger on space and spatiality as a criticism of Cartesian understanding of space, see Heidegger 2010, 98–110. See also Malpas 2012a.
seem to require each other for definition since, as Tuan describes, “undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value”: it is “a concretion of value”. Developing this thought, place can be understood as a concentration of many different kinds of interrelated or independent values. The notion of space can also be approached via its negation. For example, “vacuum” and “void” imply either empty space or no space at all. However, on a conceptual level, the opposite of space is not so much lack of space as space filled up to its measure. The “place-thinking” perspective emphasises this quality of space being filled with human values and thus with actions and practices that stem from them. It is as if space as such is reduced to a passive background for something more complex that inevitably keeps building up.

Yet place is still space at the same time, it is space with locational and emotive qualities, among other things. Place has a connotation with security, stability, and pausing, whereas space is considered open, associated with freedom or the possibility of threats, and at least the option for perpetual movement. Yet, I find that these kinds of intuitive definitions are too simplistic; they do not describe accurately enough the actual experience of lived space in its materiality and concreteness.

Human geography has to a large extent taken into consideration the relation between space and place. The work of many geographically inclined philosophers has made enlightening contributions to the question of the relationship between space and place. Jeff Malpas, for example, has written about the “relational” view of space dominant presently in geography and the social sciences and the subsequent lack of theorising and further articulation of the concept of space. Besides Malpas, Massey has also expressed the need for a more detailed definition of space instead of taking the concept for granted.

For Malpas, his “topography” or “topology” ties the definition of space to that of place. According to him, “within much contemporary literature, in geography

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22 Tuan 2008; 3, 6, 12.
23 Tuan 2008, 6.
24 Jeff Malpas 2012b, 226.
and beyond, space appears as a swirl of flows, networks, and trajectories, as a chaotic ordering that locates and dislocates, and as an effect of social process that is itself spatially dispersed and distributed”. Malpas’s contesting of the relational view of space helpfully draws attention to the permanent character of space, or to what is at least experienced as temporal longevity. When it comes to the notion of place, this kind of thinking also requires assessing whether it is defined mainly by interconnectedness with other places or by boundaries that set it apart.

Malpas’s examination of space and place shows that, in a sense, the boundaries are different for space and place, as “in the battle for someone’s space it is a question of drawing the boundaries between the individuals’ spaces more tightly or extending them. But a place can only be surrendered or maintained as a whole.”

Here I would like to add that, in a different context, Otto Bollnow writes that “place designates the closely bounded area of space into which something just fits, up to its limit, but not beyond. ‘Space’ however also means the room for movements, the elbow-room for movement”. Thus there seems to be inner structural cohesion and compactness in “place” compared to “space”, perhaps to a degree that one could speak of an economy of place.

Things too need a place, but “space” in the true sense is needed only by man. Place is something disposable in the world, “space” however is part of the transcendental condition of man.

This refers to the ontological function of space. The permanence of space versus the impermanence of place represents only one set of juxtaposed metaphorical meanings attached to these concepts. This anthropocentric view of space can, however, be contradicted by non-human perspectives, discussed later in this chapter.

A part of space, then, is not a “part” at all but a place, and a place becomes

26 Malpas 2012b, 228.
27 Bollnow 2011, 42.
28 Bollnow 2011, 43.
29 Ibid.
a “position” when man occupies it and stands on it. He has thus recognised the power of locality, he seeks it or avoids it, attempts to strengthen or enfeeble it. In any case he selects the place as his “position”. The emphasis is here on the concept of “position”, which gains a strong meaning in defining place as opposed to space. Having a place means being posited in a specific way and this indicates a location in space.

How place is defined in relation to space reveals a great deal about the qualities attached explicitly or implicitly to space. It seems that narrative, symbolic, and metaphorical meanings can only be attached to a place, not to space as such. Tuan’s concept of “topophilia” refers to the “love of place”. He associates place with safety, shelter, and attachment. Tuan also specifies that “[e]nclosed and humanized space is place. Compared to space, place is a calm center of established values”. Place is equated with a location, a geographically originating felt concentration of values. Space is thus understood as something that necessarily precedes place: there can be a space without it forming into a place but never a place without space. It is precisely the focus on the layer of meaning that differentiates place from space from the experiential point of view. Both concepts, space and place, are needed in order to understand each other; one does not exist without the other. Without being antithetical or opposite, they complement the knowledge and experience of that which surrounds and of which human beings are a part of, namely the sphere of activity.

Place identity studies imply similar conclusions when studying identity in relation to different kinds of environments. Care for the environment is often considered to require some level of place identity and attachment to a place. The theme of self-invention is also closely linked to that of identity. Personal identities are formed around recognised identities of places and they evolve dependent on each other. Many different kinds of habits are often related to these kinds of identity markers.

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30 Bollnow 2011, 134.
31 See Relph 1986; Casey 1993; Casey 1997. For an elaboration of the ancient notion of “genius loci”, see Norberg-Schulz 1980.
32 Tuan 2008, 54.
33 See e.g. Ballantyne 2011, 46.
Personal habits include relations with familiar objects and places. I have favourite places to sit for writing, where the lighting is good and where I can be undisturbed. In the kitchen I know where to reach for regularly used equipment. And I know how to rearrange the furniture when there is a gathering of people here. These things were once thought out deliberately and carefully, but now they are part of my habit-set, which is to say, part of me.\[34\]

When searching for the definition of space from the experiential perspective one has to tackle differentiating between the experience of space and the experience of place, to the extent this is possible. In a sense, place can be known and felt, but space can only ever be experienced as a certain embeddedness. Because of this, spatial experience precedes the recognition of a place and attachment to it.\[35\] Spatiality can be understood through the notions of *materiality, solidity,* or even *concreteness of space.* How this kind of understanding of space relates to experience is of key importance for understanding the effect it has on further experiences, of which especially aesthetic ones are under scrutiny here.

Another way to realign the contrast between place and space is what Marc Augé suggests:

> If a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a place which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.\[36\]

This implies that not all spaces have the required propensity to become places and that there are places that are not quite that yet in the full sense of the definition. Instead they represent some sort of “places-to-be” or “places-in-the-making”. Augé connects the local with the global and shows that these concepts are indispensably linked and central in understanding the formation of places and values associated with them.

The sense of belonging, building stronger ties, memories, and meanings is

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34 Ballantyne 2012, 110.
35 Von Bonsdorff 1998a, 129.
associated with the notion of place. Spatial experiences are more fleeting and less attached in character. Their effect is not as binding but yet at the same time spatial effects are all too often overlooked as irrelevant or temporary or not fundamental enough.

The issue of spatiality is also implicitly present in the dichotomy between natural and artificial environments, which has been increasingly questioned recently. With the invention of cyberspace\(^{37}\) and the Internet, many conventional ways of thinking about spatial issues have become questioned once more. As Doreen Massey aptly puts it:

> Space is more than distance. It is the sphere of open-ended configurations within multiplicities. Given that, the really serious question which is raised by speed-up, by “the communications revolution” and by cyberspace, is not whether space will be annihilated but what kind of multiplicities (patternings of uniqueness) and relations will be co-constructed with these new kinds of spatial configurations.\(^{38}\)

It thus seems inevitable that the invention of cyberspace among other recent changes in the experiential sphere has already opened up again the notion of space in a way that allows for its new appropriation. It should not be assessed only in relation to place but also sensorially in its materiality mirrored with these new extensions that co-construct new multiplicities and relations within their spatial configurations.

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**Space Implicit in the Notion of Environment**

Moving from definitions of space to that of environment one can note certain repetitiveness of a pattern to a degree that it seems that the concept of environment has part of its origins in that of space. Environment understood in the

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\(^{38}\) Massey 2005, 91. For example, fascination with labyrinths reminds one of the fundamental unknowability of spatial configurations. Projection of expectations is a typical way to respond in order to attempt to limit in some ways the configurations implicit within multiplicities.
traditional sense is like a container outside people where action and their lives take place. Environment is thus traditionally used to refer to the surroundings, or in a larger sense, the external world. This, however, poses a problem, since the limits of the environment are difficult to draw. Actions such as eating, breathing, and wearing clothes or technical devices such as microchip implants integrate parts of the environment directly into our bodies. Environment and person belong in the same continuum according to this line of thinking. Moreover, the container thinking attached also to the notion of space makes it difficult to understand what actually is the role that experiential or sensory qualities, such as different kinds of material densities, have “inside” the environment.

Some parallels and overlaps also exist between the concepts of nature, environment, and space. Each one of them can be understood as a surrounding or as an inclusive notion. Probably this goes to underline some of the discrepancies in the concepts, tied to the fact that all of them at some level relate to the fundamental strangeness and unpredictability we from time to time have to face in contact with our surroundings. In this sense, space can be understood as a primary framework for environment, consisting of different degrees of nature. This also goes along with some of the shifts in perspective whether using the more general term “environment” or “nature”.

Definitions of environment are as manifold as the different disciplines that address anything “environmental”. The inclusive definition of environment has its roots in ecology. Ecological aesthetics, in its turn, places in its focus the value-laden mutual interaction between organism and its environment. The dilution of the separation between person and environment on the one hand, and the concentration on the experience on the other hand, creates a seeming yet necessary friction that only environmental aesthetics has brought forth. The necessity of this line of environmental approach is fortified by the parallel separation that exists between the objectified stance of natural sciences and the underexamined territory of subjective experience.

According to Berleant, “environment” is intrinsically too dualistic a concept,
and for example “field”, “matrix”, “condition”, “context” would be better, or even “lifeworld” in all its clumsiness. However, it seems that environment with its connotation to that which surrounds manages to maintain some of the sense of estrangement which inevitably colours some situations in our lives. Spatially charged meanings thus seem inevitably common but rarely explained also in the field of environmental aesthetics.

Spatial experience is also closely linked to the very practical problems of accessibility, the point of view that different environments should be designed so that people with disabilities can physically reach them. This practical side is not to be forgotten, since accessibility issues contribute to the quality of environments and this also goes to show that a better understanding of spatial experiences can contribute even to the wider understanding of the notion of accessibility.

In order to understand space and eventually the experience it entails in the context of environmental aesthetics it can be treated as a somewhat “fluid concept”. This means that no one clear definition is attached to it, instead it varies according to the situation in what is meant by space. However, both the mathematical and the experiential aspects and attempts at definitions affect how it is perceived and understood.

Non-Human Perspectives on Spatial Experience

Learning from animals and animal studies, ethology and evolutionary theories have offered inspiration for the “biologically-oriented aestheticians” for well over a hundred years. This also explains why evolutionary aesthetics has gained increasing interest in the recent debates on aesthetic experience.

As Tuan reminds, “ethological studies show that non-human animals also have a sense of territory and of place”. Thus understanding of the actions and behaviours of non-human animals may in some cases help us to determine how

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41 Berleant 1992, 10.
42 Leddy 2012, 184.
43 Tuan 2008, 4.
environment affects human behaviour, and how this behaviour relates to the specifically human experience. However, one must not forget the complexities of human nature, since “people also respond to space and place in complicated ways that are inconceivable in the animal world”. Ethology and anthropology thus teach about the human way of inhabiting and responding to space, but these results have to be taken cautiously and complemented with accounts of different kinds of experiences, both fictive and factual.

It goes without saying that not only human beings show intentionality in spatial behaviour. The evolutionary point of view in researching spatial relations and territorial issues is helpful since it opens one’s eyes to notice other possible ways of organising the spatial dimension of life. At best, the rich variety of behaviour and solutions shown by other species in natural environments enriches an understanding of our own actions and point to new possible directions for consciously directing them. This is hardly a new insight, since ethological notions of animal pathways, for example, have affected street planning in cases when trodden paths are formed into more formal roads and streets for the growing human habitation.

Evolutionary aesthetics can be seen to provide a sort of “non-human” perspective on human beings. Denis Dutton lists as “innate, universal features and capabilities of the human mind”, among others, “an intuitive physics that we use to keep track of how objects fall, bounce or bend” and “an intuitive sense of space, including imaginative mapping of the general environment”. He also mentions instincts such as fear of heights as shared by humans, although it has on other occasions been questioned whether humans actually have proper instincts in the sense that birds, for example, have. These capacities affect the ways in which different phenomena are experienced. But honing of skills attached to these capacities is equally important. In the larger perspective of aesthetic and somatic experiences, I put tentatively forth the idea that each individual possesses a certain set of body technologies or somatechnologies. This is since being able to

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44 Tuan 2008, 4.
45 See Diaconu 2011a; Diaconu refers here to Bollnow.
46 Dutton 2009, 43–44.
experience spatially, for example, is based on a set of capacities, sets of skills to use them, and properties of the human body that enable both the capacities and the skills. These skills can also be enhanced by both learning and technology.

Evolutionary aesthetics\textsuperscript{47} provides an especially acute insight in the sense that it tilts the perspective towards a more holistic approach, considering man to be quintessentially a part of his environment. As this view is further developed, it can provide interesting parallel points with the quite recent notions of both environmental and aesthetic engagement. In a sense, the full potential of evolutionary aesthetics has not yet been made use of in the complex setting of the human relation to environment in which pressing ecological questions can no longer be overlooked.

What is of interest and easy to comprehend is the evolutionary perspective’s focus on the \textit{ability} to perceive and interpret space. The emphasis is on a skill that has collectively an evolutionary history but which is individually cherished and developed. The focus is also then directed on the amount of common ground for appreciating and evaluating aesthetic issues that all human beings share. This fading out of cultural differences also takes away the emphasis on linguistic and other such derived meanings and brings the somatic, “innate” manner of experiencing back into the limelight. This return has to be emphasised, since for philosophy this belief in the universal human nature has been a defining one before the rise of social sciences during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

Dutton emphasises the “messiness” of aesthetic experience,\textsuperscript{48} because it is affected by a concatenation of different sets of “sub-instincts” that are in no way in harmony with each other.\textsuperscript{49} Not only “evolved capacities”, such as the sense of hearing in its rich differentiating ability and the limits they set, but also our perception, knowledge, and interpretation of these capacities direct human activity. Some aspects of being a perceiving, experiencing human being have simply not been that well articulated and brought into the realm of philosophy,

\textsuperscript{47} Dutton uses systematically the notion of “Darwinian aesthetics” instead of evolutionary aesthetics, which is however the more established form.

\textsuperscript{48} For “aesthetic unreliability”, see Chapter V; Melchionne 2012.

\textsuperscript{49} See Dutton 2009, ch. 8.
science, or even language. Such include everyday activities, many various somatic phenomena, and their relation to objects. This unknowingness is already proven by the attention given to these issues by contemporary philosophy and science that, however, does not seem sufficiently informed.

Landscape preferences recounted by Dutton tell not only about actual preferences but also which aspects in landscapes draw most attention.\(^5\) Assessing risks and opportunities are practical survival skills when associated with primal settings of life but when transferred to the social and more developed cultural realm, they become the skills necessary in order to interpret and place value on the phenomena linking people and their interests and passions. In a sense, the evolutionary perspective emphasizes the old tradition of *sensus communis* when it comes to certain perceptive and aesthetic abilities, for example in perceiving spatial forms and dimensions. This universality of shared abilities is seen as something developed for evolutionary purposes.

Dutton considers that during the Holocene, the epoch of the rapid growth and technological development of the human species, the collaboration of skills and human sociability gain more and more importance in coping with the environment. Dutton compares these properties to human reflexes in the sense that they are universally shared and instantaneously in action in all or most human activities.\(^5\) Learning to live and work together, to tolerate and share space with others is thus considered essential for the survival and further flourishing of the human species. This development is reflected in different aspects of culture, from introspective art to common jurisdiction. Reflected in these burgeoning forms of human activity are also the feel, need, and experience of space, which are deeply embedded in each individual.

According to Dutton, the emphasis has been on the intellectual components, particularly since Kant explicitly denied the value of the sensual components of aesthetic experience.\(^5\) This criticism of one-sidedness has been heard from other very different directions as well. Concerning the spatiality of sensory

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\(^{50}\) For *prospect–refuge theory* and more on landscape preferences, see Appleton 1975.

\(^{51}\) Dutton 2009, 45.

\(^{52}\) Dutton 2009, 49.
experiences, it can in any case be stated that ever since Darwin, “space no longer was a neutral void; rather, the organism and the environment were mutually affecting each other, in a system where organisms also had a ‘will’, acting out the advantages in biological adaption”.53 This mutual affect is also the basis for a more comprehensive ecological understanding of a human being’s relation to the environment.

Lived and Experienced Space

It is of great importance to bring into the discussion more strongly the description and analysis of spatial experience that Otto Bollnow gives in his *Human Space* (*Mensch und Raum*, 1963).54 It is his intention to do for the concept of space the same that Henri Bergson over half a century before him did for that of time. Philosophical thought had been led by the “priority of temporality represented by Heidegger”.55 And indeed, in order to move from the Heideggerian development of concepts to Bollnow’s thinking one must take a leap in descriptive quality as well as in the themes in focus. Bollnow claims that instead of emphasising only the role of temporality, spatiality is of key importance in defining the human experience. Yet it is precisely its relation to the surrounding world which makes the spatial nature of experience difficult to analyse and assess:

> Compared to time, which concerns the innermost centre of humanity, space seemed philosophically less rewarding, because it seemed to belong only to the outer environment of mankind.56

Bollnow, even though his thinking has not been as widespread as some others’,

53 Kwa 2010, 90.
54 In the introduction to *Human Space*, Bollnow first gives a short account of how Simmel brought Bergson’s ideas to Germany and how Heidegger developed them in his existential ontology. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty for their part continued the theme in France. Eugène Minkowski’s work is mentioned as an example of how Bergson’s thought also affected psychology and psychopathology. Bollnow 2011, 15.
55 Bollnow 2011, 16.
56 Ibid.
can be characterised as one of the proponents through whose work the so-called “spatial turn” was possible in the latter part of 20th-century thought.\textsuperscript{57}

Bollnow aims at giving “a coherent, systematic interpretation” of experienced space, a concept he first motivates.\textsuperscript{58} Bollnow prefers the notion of “experienced space” (\textit{erlebter Raum}) to “lived space”\textsuperscript{59} (\textit{gelebter Raum}) because, “living” as an intransitive verb does not suit the purpose of defining space. In other words, one cannot “live space” in a proper grammatical sense. However, Bollnow would otherwise prefer “lived space” since, according to him, it does not have the same subjective and psychological implications “experienced space” carries. Bollnow wants to make distinct that experienced space is not about any random psychological reality or “subjective colouring which is imposed on the space”.\textsuperscript{60} It can be argued though that this “subjective colouring” or even psychological reality cannot be avoided even though Bollnow himself strongly opposes it since, for him, it seems to fade out the actual, concrete space to which the experience is linked. Instead, here is argued, the subjective, partly psychological level of experience could be included in the notion of space that Bollnow is attempting to define. In any case, experienced space is more closely linked to experiencing through the senses, something that is of the essence when the relation to one’s spatial surroundings is under investigation.

Delving deeper into the notion of space requires differentiating between “the abstract space of the mathematician and physicist and specifically experienced human space”.\textsuperscript{61} Mathematical space is measurable in metres and centimetres, in three dimensions. Bergson presented “durée” as opposed to time as a mathematical concept. The same goes for space, the starting point being three-dimensional Euclidean space with an orthogonal system of axes. Contrasted to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[57] Bollnow’s account of human spaces was translated into English and published as late as in 2011 so it is reasonable to believe that it has not yet received the wider attention it deserves.
\item[58] Bollnow 2011, 17.
\item[59] Bollnow often refers to Graf Karlfried von Dürckheim’s writings on lived space; cf. Hasse 2005. Also, Eugène Minkowski’s differentiation between “distance vécu” and “espace vécu” offers a clear notion of space understood as lived distance. It is not space as such, but the relations within it that form the experiential basis for human actions.
\item[60] Bollnow 2011, 19–20.
\item[61] Bollnow 2011, 17.
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this, “in experienced space there are no axial directions of the same quality, but particular, distinct directions that are inextricably linked with the relationship of the human being with space”.  

The homogeneity of mathematical space means that no point or direction is distinguishable above others. The unstructured and regular nature of mathematical space relies on the idea of it being infinite. Experienced space according to Bollnow differs from mathematical space since it has a distinct centre, being tied to the location of the experiencing human body in space, and its system of axes is based on the human body’s upright position, which opposes gravity. Bollnow points out that qualitative differences are also typical of experienced space, and thus a structure is built on these differences that is not analogous to that of mathematical space. Partly due to these qualitative differences, instabilities become pronounced in the sphere of experienced space.

In addition, the relation to infinity is different, since infinity cannot be directly experienced but the notion, a hunch of it, or something representing it is still somewhat conveyed via the general experience of space. Human behaviour or “conduct” and relationships, which relate experienced space to a human being, affect the experience and make it laden with different, often conflicting values and expectations. The solid phenomenological background of Bollnow’s thought becomes clear with his notion of “space as it is present for humanity, and accordingly of the human relationship to this space; for it is impossible to separate one from another”.

Thus, according to Bollnow, experienced space opposes mathematical space in many different ways. Most strikingly, because it is tied to the location of the sentient body and because it is the area where relationships define qualities that are not measurable in the mathematical sense of quantifying space. Bollnow’s knowledge of physics and its notion of space is of great importance in carving out his model of experienced space that differs from space as mathematically understood. Bollnow stresses that mathematical space derives from the experienced

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62 Bollnow 2011, 44.
63 Bollnow 2011, 18.
64 Bollnow 2011, 19.
space, “when it disregards the various concrete vital relations and reduces life to a mere subject of understanding”. 65

Beginning to integrate the social side of spatial experience into the picture, Bollnow’s description which refers to Minkowski is a good starting point: “We live and act in space, and our personal lives, as well as the social life of humanity, unfolds in space”. 66 This unfolding is a continuous process that is reflected in space as its use and actions that take place within it. The aesthetic quality of these acts, and to some extent the personal lives of those involved, is defined by an intricate relation between the actions belonging to the social sphere, how the space affects them, and how all this is eventually experienced or experientable in the first place.

Bollnow emphasises that space in relation to human beings has a dual nature: it is both supportive and obstructive, both an extension and a possibility. It is like a familiar limb that we know to some extent but also something foreign, even unknown and frightening, facing or confronting us from the outside. This dual nature is seen in the movement to and from, the push and pull effects in the relation with space. Sometimes space protects and works in favour of our experience, actions, and purposes. At other times it is faced as foreign, uncompromising, and resistant to any effort to mould it or even surrender to it in order to conform to it. Bollnow, quoting Dürckheim, stresses “attitudes and orientations”, meaning that every change in an individual, his moods and mind for example, affect his lived space. 67 The relation is necessarily a close one, even organic to the point where cause and effect are almost impossible to discern.

One contemporary point of comparison to Bollnow’s thinking is worth mentioning here. Bollnow ascribes to Gaston Bachelard a tendency towards “magical idealism” that is crystallised in his creative writing in The Poetics of Space (La Poétique de l’Espace, 1958). In a sense, Bachelard projects the experience of space solely to the imagination, so that one can describe it only in poetic terms. Whereas Bachelard describes a poetic, even metaphorical space, Bollnow is interested

in describing the “concrete experienced space”. According to him, Bachelard’s descriptions are complementary, not alternative ones to his own.\textsuperscript{68} This is easy to understand because of the different approaches the two philosophers have.

Bollnow’s investigation proceeds from experienced space to the spatiality of human life, which according to him “correspond to each other in a strict correlative”.\textsuperscript{69} It is precisely on this correlated relation that one can start building and opening up the aesthetic dimension through the understanding of the body as a sensory entity.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{68} Bollnow 2011, 22.\\
\textsuperscript{69} Bollnow 2011, 24.
\end{flushleft}
II Body, Senses, and Spatial Experience

All of the senses function somewhat on a spatial level. Awareness and first-hand perception always take place from a certain spatial point of view together with a certain point in time. Most of this spatial sensing and perceiving happens on an unconscious level as it has become so habitual. Only in spaces that somehow differ from the usual environments can the spatial discerning capabilities be challenged. In environmental aesthetics, immediate experiences and both their nature and value are traditionally considered important. Also the plurality of senses is centrally acknowledged for example in the context of urban multisensoriness.70

Bollnow emphasises the importance of investigating “the share of the individual sense in the building up of total space” and of distinguishing “between the corresponding forms of space, seeing space, hearing space and touching space”.71 From a purely biological point of view, depending on the functioning and combination of the senses, different kinds of information about the world are acquired. For instance, someone who is colour blind does not see all of the same colours than others. It cannot be said with certainty, however, that colours are necessarily perceived similarly by individuals who do not have a recognisable dysfunction such as colour blindness. Some subtler differences are possible, even probably between individuals. The same goes with eyesight in general. Being

70 See e.g. Sepänmaa 2003.
near- or far-sighted in a small degree might not be recognised as a problem, yet it undoubtedly affects perception and is enough to make it incommensurable with the perception of others.

*Multisensuality or multisensoriness*\(^{72}\) refers to the functioning together of the senses and thus to the difficulty of separating the spheres of the senses from each other. This “contamination” of the senses can be grasped by the total sensual experience of wine tasting, for example, which involves vision, touch, as well as smell and taste. As this example shows, the use of the senses and especially the interpretation of the sensations transmitted by them is in many ways tied to socially constructed practices as well.\(^{73}\) It is worth noting that this is also an area ripe for cognitive biases.\(^{74}\)

In the case of spatial and aesthetic experiences it is difficult to pin them to one specific mode of sensory activity. The same applies to traditional art forms as well as to the wider concept of everyday spaces,\(^{75}\) which we are approaching here, phase by phase. Since there are several spatially relevant aspects in different sensory routes, the traditional five senses are presented here from the perspective of understanding some of the possible ways they are to be accounted for affecting spatial experience. Also some of their effects further to aesthetic experiences are tentatively presented insomuch as the aesthetic also comprises a strong, recognisable spatial component.

The everyday experience of the bodily existence in space is characterised by a minimal amount or even a total lack of reflection with regard to the senses. We seem to perceive the functioning of the senses most clearly when they are

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\(^{72}\) Both terms are used; see e.g. “multisensuality” in Vannini, Waskul & Gottschalk 2012 and “multi-sensoriness” in Sepänmaa 2003.

\(^{73}\) For more on sensory studies and the sociology and anthropology of the senses, see Vannini, Waskul & Gottschalk 2012.

\(^{74}\) Neuroscience, neurophenomenology, and philosophy of perception represent some of the newer strands of research that offer complementary views on how perception works. What has remained an unanswered question for the time being is how and at what point neuroscience or philosophy of perception turn into aesthetics and what can be gained from the intersection of these different disciplines.

\(^{75}\) The notion of “everyday spaces” comes from Roland Barthes’ lecture series *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces* (Comment vivre ensemble: Simulations romanesques de quelques espaces quotidiens, 1976–77, publ. 2007, transl. 2012), which has served as an overall inspiration and starting point for this study.
“out of order”, or something otherwise unexpected happens. This is not purely a mechanism of transmission and processing, for body and mind are not separable in such a neat way. Even separating sensation from perception is not possible, as theories of embodiment (presented briefly in a later chapter) have already proven. Some assessment of the different roles of the senses has to be made, however, in order to understand how the somatic elements of engagement become articulated in the process of experiencing space. This is a challenging task, and obviously it is only possible to scratch the surface within the confines of this study.

Sensorium, in the sphere of science, is most commonly understood as comprising the totality of an organism’s perception. This includes everything from the sensing organs all the way to the interpretation by cognitive capacities of the information the sensory system conveys. Perceptive sensibilities are affected by different environmental as well as inner factors. Environmental sensory inputs frame situations and direct attention. By these terms it is possible to grasp some aspects of the “ontogenesis of space and motion perception”, 76 for example. However, it is precisely the experiential level of this process that is of interest here. This cannot be grasped from the purely biological basis of perception, even though understanding the processes involved is important.

Regarding different concepts, that of corpus or Körper becoming more central especially in continental thinking somewhat coincides with the so-called “bodily turn”. 77 Partly because of this, the body as the starting point for also taking the relation to space into consideration still seems an obvious choice. The notion of “bodily space” is strongly linked to a corporeal sensory system and the ways it is used. Gernot Böhme stresses the difference between the space of “bodily presence” and space as “a medium of representation” and reminds us that these two different concepts are mixed in the everyday usage of the notion of space in a somewhat confusing way. 78 As in the Bollnowian sense of experienced space, the space understood via bodily presence underlines the importance of studying

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76 See Kellman 1995.
77 E.g. Nancy 2008.
78 Böhme 2003, 1. Böhme also gives a concise account of how the concept of space unravels in Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason.
more closely the sensory system in this context.

One’s body and its inbuilt axial system become relevant when assessing the body’s relation to space. Generality cannot thus be expected of it, but instead it is an inverted measure by which external space is perceived. This personal measuring appliance is, however, independent in the sense that it is not linked to the change of position of the body: it “acquires a peculiar independence”. Or as Bollnow concludes, “I do not move my space, but I move in space”. 79 The internal spatial axis of the body thus does not allow actual control over space, it merely makes possible observing the change that is taking place in it.

It is a matter of debate whether a notion of bodily knowledge can be attached to the abilities required in the use of the sensorium. What constitutes this kind of bodily knowledge can be linked to the many ingrained perceptual habits and integrating new uses of the senses to them. Sensory cues lead perception in different kinds of directions. These cues already imply a “diverse grounding that includes a history of experience and acculturation”, whereas information on the environment depends on sensory stimuli. 80 Depth perception, for example, is a result of the intricate working together of different senses. 81

Approaching senses through the skills 82 that are attached to them also opens up a new horizon for the refinement of the aesthetic capacities of an individual. These capacities include different “tools” ranging from aesthetic sensibility to cognitive skills in organising perceptive information in accordance to the stimuli in a way that is most favourable for the well-being of an individual.

Already anticipating a theme of everyday aesthetics with its implied habit-making processes that I will bring up in more detail in later chapters, I want to point towards a consideration of the relation of senses to habits. Habits are grounded in everyday acts and environments through the functioning of the

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79 Bollnow 2011, 46.
80 Epstein 1995, 11.
81 For a detailed account on managing perceptive information relating to depth perception, see Cutting & Vishton 1995. Pictorial or two-dimensional space is excluded from the scope of this study, even though it is clear that it both affects and is affected by the perception and further experience of three-dimensional, lived space. For more on perceiving pictorial space, see e.g. Rogers 1995.
82 See Ingold 2000.
senses and through the physical presence of the body. Entrenching a new habit is usually also the first level of acquiring a new skill. Questioning and re-establishing new habits is also essential for perfecting skills.\textsuperscript{83} These skills can be related to everyday actions, even though the more conscious acquisition of skills tends to be related to more complex skills.

Following the traditional division of the senses seems like a reasonable solution to presenting some of the ways in which sensory apparatus is present in spatial experience, and already touches upon the ways in which the senses also contribute to aesthetic experiences.\textsuperscript{84} Human sensual experience is a blend of different inputs. The order of the senses given here is mostly arbitrary in the sense that they are not presented as a hierarchical system, but more as a taxonomy of different means of the sensorium. The literature on which these presentations rely necessarily represents a very limited selection, chosen partly in order to preliminarily show how the senses contribute to spatial experience in such a way that points towards the aesthetic.

**Vision as a Spatial Sense**

Eyesight has traditionally been considered central in perceiving space. The Western art tradition has further enforced this impression ever since the Renaissance. Even one of its great inventions, central perspective, can be considered a frame through which the volume of space is perceived. This kind of approach to space is necessarily very vision-oriented, and reflects and strengthens the experience of concrete spaces at the same time. In the tradition of art, perception (Lat. “percipere”, to obtain, perceive) and perspective (from Lat. “perspicere”, to inspect) have been partly merged, as if all forms of perception could be fitted into this frame of dissecting and presenting and representing space.

Physically, visual information is based on light that enters the eyes. The eyes

\textsuperscript{83} Sennett 2012, 200–201.

\textsuperscript{84} For a comprehensive overview of the so-called “secondary senses” of touch, smell and taste as opposed to the “theoretical senses” of vision and hearing (Hegel), see Diaconu 2010.
and different parts of the brain then interpret this light as representing different properties and qualities: colours, forms, shapes, motion, and depth become distinguished from the visual information transmitted as changes in light and various other cues.

According to the theories of tactile vision, vision and haptic perception are in relation with each other.85 As James J. Gibson remarks, seeing things:

could always be verified by touching things, and hence it was possible that the solidity and depth of the visual world were originally not visible but tangible. Vision might get its spatial character from the tactile and muscular impressions which always accompany it.86

In a similar way, the felt tangibility of space is described in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of vision as a “palpation” with the eyes.87 These references can be understood to describe eyesight as having the propensity to perceive the tactile properties of space. In this way, different senses are not so separate after all, but are intertwined in enabling different modes of perception in one sensation. In other words, this can be termed the ecology of sensual relations and is worth a closer look.88

As these examples show, the notorious Western ocularcentrism was increasingly challenged during the last century.89 However, vision and visual information still dominate the field and different modes of perception in a way that is difficult to totally overcome.90 When it comes to perceiving space, visual information is also considered to be the main source of information. It is taken somewhat as a given in the common everyday thought that the eyes function as the “windows” through which we peek into the surrounding world. The extent to which this “experiential ocularcentrism” is a product of a specific culture is difficult to
discern. It might even be somewhat unnecessary to track if we wish to extend our closer examination to the whole of the spatial experience. But by noting the other sensory parts of the experience, I believe that the role of the visual in this equation will be clarified.

Spatial dimensions and relations are often in theory considered to be deduced from static optical information.\textsuperscript{91} However, when objects, the perceiving subject, or a person’s eyes are in motion, which in reality is most often the case, spatial dimensions and forms are easier to estimate. For example, an unrestricted horizon is rarely seen in urban environments. Movement in that sense defines the changing borders of visual perception: when changing location or even position in an urban environment, the environmental limits to perceptual perception change. Often this shift is very slight, as when the body tilts to another angle in relation to the building next to it, but sometimes the sudden change can be bigger. This happens, for example, when leaning over the ledge on the roof of a tall building.

\textit{Visual perception and control}\textsuperscript{92} and, on the other hand, \textit{visual information on space and motion}\textsuperscript{93} are constitutive in understanding how spatial experience is moulded. It seems that these phenomena are also affected to some extent by other sensory modalities, but mainly assessed in research through their visual impact.

\textit{Peripheral vision}, distinguishable from \textit{foveal or central vision}, is a perceptual phenomenon related to the functioning of the human eye. Studying how it affects experience reveals a great deal about the nature of visual perception in general:

\begin{quote}
In normal vision […] I direct my gaze upon a sector of the landscape, which comes to life and is disclosed, while the other objects recede into the periphery and become dormant, while, however, not ceasing to be there.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

By this Merleau-Ponty seems to emphasise how the sense of vision concerns as much the knowledge that goes with it than the actual perceptual information. Our visual perception is always a partial take on the world. Things have a back

\textsuperscript{91} See Gillam 1995.
\textsuperscript{92} See Warren 1995; Proffitt & Kaiser 1995.
\textsuperscript{93} Lappin 1995.
\textsuperscript{94} Merleau-Ponty 2002, 78.
side that cannot be seen at the same time when the front is towards us. People also have a back side with a horizon comprised of things with visible features. These recognitions lead to a necessary acknowledgement of the world as being bigger than our perception of it.

Juhani Pallasmaa also emphasises the importance of peripheral vision in his notion of tactile architecture.\textsuperscript{95} It is essential in the spatial appropriation of spaces, since the totality of space requires a more varied perception for the space to unfold in its experienced entirety. This is not possible solely by means of the perceptual capacity of the eye, functioning in the manner in which it is traditionally depicted. Looking at something from a straight angle reveals only a limited facet of the object of attention. In addition, this insight takes into account the fact that the eyes also have other, less direct modes of retrieving visual information. Another example of this is glancing.\textsuperscript{96}

Vision and spatial experience are thus deeply intertwined in ways that, despite their obviousness, are still not thoroughly understood. An example from urban environments might serve a purpose here. It is possible to take and record visual mementos of cities as photographs. Distinct cityscapes instantly bring to mind the cities we have visited, even on a level where you can remind yourself of the feel of walking down their streets. The smells of a city are not transferable in the same way. Smells on the other hand, work in close relation with the memory, and even at an airport you can in many instances tell from a specific smell that you have arrived at a certain city.

Vision is easily distracted by external phenomena. Specifically in outside spaces or, for example, in vehicles moving in them, hindrances to the perception of space can be caused by meteorological phenomena\textsuperscript{97} such as falling snow,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Pallasmaa 2005a, 331.
\item See Casey 2004.
\item For the relation of weather and aesthetics, see Diaconu 2011a. For more specifically on “meteorological aesthetics”, see Diaconu 2014 & 2015.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
blizzards, fog, smog, or smoke.\textsuperscript{99} Even a mirage formed by hot air can distract visual perception in a most deceptive way. An unreasonable amount of fear is often triggered by conditions where vision, more than other senses, is hindered. This can be explained by the feeling of losing control of one’s surroundings, of not being able to determine one’s exact position in relation to objects or people in the immediate proximity of a given space. Depending on the situation and expectations, the same obfuscating conditions can also be found soothing. The impeded vision, reduced visibility, and thus lowered expectations for clarity and action can be found comforting and this can create a unique sort of intimacy, thus felt completely at the opposite end of the spectrum of human emotions compared to fear and anxiety linked to even a temporary loss of vision because of external conditions. Differences in reactions can also be a result of different attitudes, knowledge, or set of skills in the first place.\textsuperscript{100}

Visual perception and the reception of visual information is one topic that a relatively recent field of neuroaesthetics studies.\textsuperscript{101} The human visual system in its totality is central in order to assess what objects are, providing information for categorising them in relation to others, and, most interestingly for us, localising them in space via their luminance and motion. Vision thus emphasises difference: an object is recognised in the first place mainly through the way it is different from the other, envoirning objects. Compared to other senses, this distinction is possibly easier to grasp. Differing from vision, the sense of smell to a large extent relies on a certain state of “non-smelling” from which distinct smells emerge to be noticed and recognised.

It still seems that a wider approach is required in order to grasp how the environment is actively structured following from this information. Understanding

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{98} E.g. “floating in empty space”, “total dematerialization of the surrounding world”, twilight; Bollnow 2011, 208.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Smoke can obviously be encountered in enclosed spaces as well, either by intention or in such undesired occasions as building fires. In the art context the element of smoke is used in a spatially and perceptually interesting way e.g. by Danish artist Jeppe Hein (b. 1974) in his installation “Smoking Bench” (2002).
\item \textsuperscript{100} Bollnow 2011, 210–211.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Neuroaesthetics seems at this point to be very much oriented towards the (visual) perception of art.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
interpretive focus is central as well in order to understand not only how vision affects, but also how it does not affect, or even actively impedes, spatial experience in some cases.102

Haptic Perception and Communication

The sense of touch has two sides to it since it enables both perception and communication, often at the same time. Haptic perception refers to recognising an object via the sense of touch. Information about the surface and the form of an object is literally felt and thus recognised by the experiencer. Haptic communication comprises the possibility of conveying and receiving information of some sorts via touch. This two-way function of touch is unique among the senses. Other “main” senses such as sight, hearing, taste, or smell cannot convey information of the perceiver and thus reciprocally communicate with the “outside” world. Senses besides touch welcome information but cannot actively reciprocate it or “give it back”. As already noted in the context of vision, one prominent view maintains that touch does not configure a space on its own, but instead co-operates with vision in the production of spatial perception.103

Touch and the haptic dimension of perception also convey information on volume, pressure, and the scale of closeness or distance to objects and other people.104 Dynamic or kinesthetic touch105 involves the effort of the muscles beyond the sheer surface of the skin, thus acquiring information of the object’s weight, position, dimensions, and so on. The sense of touch helps in assessing narrow and restrictive spaces. The closeness of concrete boundaries for the body to move can be touched when in a close range. Small spaces can also feel comforting and

102 E.g. in the case of spatially complex labyrinths, in which visual cues are scarce and which test the limits of sense perception and cognitive capacities at the same time.
103 Bollnow 2011, 204.
104 For Michel Serres’s metaphors of skin as “carte d’identité” and “carte moirée”, see Serres 1985, 13–86; Serres 2009. For Jacques Derrida’s account of sense and the senses of touch based on Nancy’s thinking and going back all the way to Aristotle, see Derrida 2005. See also Paterson 2007.
small children, and sometimes adults alike, often find delight in fitting themselves in small nooks and closets. Hapticity on a spatial level refers most often to the perceived forms and dimensions of objects that inhabit a space. These objects mould the space from the inside, so to speak. This dynamic friction between the inside and the outside is reflected in experience. One could say that in a sense the materiality of designed space, which is in most cases dependent on something that defines its contours, is particularly perceivable to the sense of touch.

Touching objects also conveys information of the ageing process of materials and surfaces, as Yuriko Saito, with some reservation, proposes. However, in Saito’s view tactile sensations need accompanying visual clues in order to indicate agedness. The skin of the fingers and hands is mainly used in haptic sensing. Some artworks are especially created to evoke haptic experiences. Sculptures that can be touched or otherwise haptically stimulating works of art often challenge the boundaries of conventional distance in the sphere of art. Exhibitions directed specifically to children or disabled groups very often utilise multisensory artworks. This might also be because the process of learning is believed to be facilitated by multisensoral possibilities. In any case, the use of haptic sensing is more accepted and even expected from children than from adults. Learning many of the basic skills through the concreteness of one’s surroundings requires a fair amount of haptic perception.

Thermoception, the phenomenon of sensing heat can also be of relevance for spatial and aesthetic experience in some specific cases. It can be traced to the same receptors of the skin that are related to the sense of touch. Experientially this can be grasped by some undesirable conditions that are created through planned activity within built environments. For example, both incandescent and halogen lights produce a lot of heat as a by-product of light and they can create

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106 The exaggeration of this enjoyment of tight spaces and pressure on the body is typical of autism; Grandin 2005, 318–320.
107 Saito 2007, 273. For the notion of patina, see also Diaconu 2011b, 28–29.
an extremely unpleasant sensation in tight spaces that are not well ventilated.\textsuperscript{108} The heat might not be recognised as the source of the overall discomfort but the desire to escape might be associated with bright lights or other factors in the situation instead. A similarly summoned experience, tinged with the use of imagination instead of actual sensory experience, is attainable when one sits by the sea on either a hot summer or a cold winter day. The water looks pleasant and even inviting for a swim when one knows it is relatively warm, but just knowing and imagining it to be ice cold makes it look much more unwelcoming. This is possible even though one does not have actual contact with the water.

Even though the senses are brought up here in an attempt to chart their role in spatial experiences, their role in aesthetic experience is also inevitably linked to their functioning. The physical basis of the senses leaves a great variety of possibilities for interpretation. This physicality bears an interesting relation to aesthetic qualities that have nonetheless been less investigated outside the sphere of the traditional concept of art. Sherri Irvin, for example, argues that it is possible to have aesthetic experiences based on such somatic and private phenomena such as scratching an itch.\textsuperscript{109} These kinds of “epidermal sensations”\textsuperscript{110} undeniably have an aesthetic dimension as such. Especially in the sphere of the everyday cutaneous experiences are related to so-called simpler pleasures that, however, build up into more complex experiential entities. Pleasurable somatic experiences also foster the ability to enjoy and find more positive value in experiences. This, I believe, is accumulated and reflected in more complex forms of experiences as well.

Such a common medical condition as allergy can cause strong repulsion towards certain places and spaces where one cannot avoid contact with allergens causing the unpleasant reaction. This is not necessarily consciously understood even though the negative cutaneous reaction taints to some extent the most

\textsuperscript{108} This is well described by Junichiro Tanizaki: “‘Hot’ is no word for the effect, and the closer to the ceiling the worse it is – your head and neck and spine feel as if they were being roasted. One of these balls of fire alone would suffice to light the place, yet three or four blaze down from the ceiling, and there are smaller versions on the walls and pillars, serving no function but to eradicate every trace of shadow.” Tanizaki 2001, 57.

\textsuperscript{109} Irvin 2008.

\textsuperscript{110} Diaconu 2011a.
positive and pleasant aspects inherent to that particular place. One may start to avoid other similar places, and traces of this mental impediment stay long after the allergens have been removed. This is presented here as an example of the strong effect even the sensations perceived through the skin have in the perception of environment.

Touch avoidance as a type of behaviour is linked to how differently individuals experience the sense of touch. Being uncomfortable with physical touch weakens the person’s contact with certain aspects of the lived world. On the other hand, touch deprivation, no matter what its reason, is a state associated with a lack of nurture, care, and human tactile contact, and has been linked to such states that affect the overall quality of life as depression, for example.\textsuperscript{111} Cultural differences related to practices such as hugging or kissing when meeting someone, can lead to situations where well-intended touching is perceived as intrusive and thus contradicts the sense and need of one’s own privacy and physical integrity.\textsuperscript{112}

\textbf{Acoustic Perception of Space}

Hearing helps to discern distances and volumes of spaces. An echo is an example of sound as a spatial agent. Sound bounces back from hard surfaces and thus gives some approximation of the size of the space where it takes place. Sound obeys some boundaries since different kinds of materials affect how it functions. In a way, sound has this ability to evoke the illusion of a haptic quality as it acts differently when encountering different materials. Also between people, sounds ranging from a whisper to shouting, give information about the communication distance between people.\textsuperscript{113}

Sounds are central in defining the size of different spaces and approximating distances. This “echo-sounding” of human beings is almost unconscious\textsuperscript{114} and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} See Field 2002.
\item \textsuperscript{112} For more factors affecting the phenomenon of human embrace (such as movement patterns), see Nagy 2011.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Hall 1969, 108.
\item \textsuperscript{114} E.g. the echo sounding of animals such as bats and dolphins.
\end{itemize}
most noticed when the sense of hearing has been lost. Sound is reflected differently from different building materials and the ability to assess these materials in the walls of an inside space, for example, is acquired through learning, but quite automatically.

Concepts such as *sonic information*\textsuperscript{115} and *auditory culture*\textsuperscript{116} emphasise the role of sounds in everyday life.\textsuperscript{117} Traffic, for example, relies heavily on the sense of hearing. The limits of perception become evident with hearing perhaps more apparently than with any other sense. Hearing assists in the process of anticipation. Most people know by experience how frightening it is to be passed from behind by a silent bicycle that nonetheless advances at a very fast speed. Old creaking or squeaking bicycles are much more gentle in this sense for one can anticipate their advance even from behind well in time. The unintended sound they produce might not be particularly pleasant or aesthetic in that sense, but it nonetheless provides extra functionality in the form of safety in some situations.

*Psychoacoustics* studies sound perception and how this perception affects spatial experience. One is led further into questioning how silence as a phenomenon is linked to spatial features. In architecture *auditory cues* are created either intentionally or as by-products of the design. Building materials, the shapes of spaces and the scale, for example, affect how sounds are amplified in and between built spaces. The production of sounds is, however, related to the variety of actions that specific spaces afford.

Also in natural environments where space is seemingly less bound or limited, information on spatial phenomena is emitted or enhanced via the sense of hearing, such as in the case of hearing the “distant rumble of continuous avalanches in a nearby valley”.\textsuperscript{118} In the same way the sound of approaching thunder in urban settings is echoed, resonated, and amplified by buildings, bringing an advance reminder of the approaching majestic and sublime weather phenomenon.

The distinction between musical and non-musical sounds seems to hold

\textsuperscript{115} Truax 1984. \\
\textsuperscript{116} Bull & Back 2003. \\
\textsuperscript{117} For a concise overview of sound research, see Adams 2009. \\
\textsuperscript{118} Forsey 2013, 207.
some importance also in the context of the relation between spatial and acoustic experience. Ambient sounds, in any case, enrich experiences, and in some occasions, are able to convey some substantial information about spatial qualities. Raymond Murray Schafer's concept of *soundscape* describes the sonic environment. It is thus related to acoustic ecology, which focuses on the auditive aspects of the relationship between an individual and his or her surroundings. Schafer defines *acoustic space* in his *Glossary of Soundscape Terms* as follows: “The profile of a sound over the landscape. The acoustic space of any sound is that area over which it may be heard before it drops below the ambient sound level.”\(^{119}\) Schafer also brings up the change related to the “electric revolution” of splitting permanently the analogous relation of sound and its source: sound is no longer tied to its source in space or in time.\(^{120}\)

Listening to music also greatly changes how a place or space is experienced. It is well known that the commercial muzak style of music was developed solely for the purpose of affecting the mood of people and subsequently their behaviour in public and semi-public spaces.\(^{121}\) Shopping centres are among the most common places to hear this kind of background music. Classical music has been used in order to drive away loitering teenagers or other unwanted groups of people from shopping centres. The effect of music in these cases is presumably considered to be the distraction and harm caused to these unwanted people. Yet this is done without causing actual harm or unpleasant experiences to those who are actually welcome in these semi-public spaces, namely the customers. It seems unreasonable to think that the aesthetic preferences of these groups would be in such drastic dissonance that this alone is enough to drive away some and attract others.

Listening to music through earphones can create an effective personal space\(^{122}\) in the midst of the most public situations, and in this sphere the atmosphere\(^{123}\)

\(^{119}\) Schafer 1994, 271.
\(^{120}\) Schafer names this split “schizophonia”; Schafer 1994, 71, 89–91.
\(^{121}\) UNESCO resolution from 1969 denounces “the intolerable infringement of individual freedom and of the right of everyone to silence, because of the abusive use, in private and public places, of recorded and broadcast music.” Schafer 1994, 97.
\(^{122}\) See Chapter III.
\(^{123}\) See Chapter III.
is strongly affected by the type of music chosen and the listener’s relation to it. This is a very clear yet somewhat more complicated example of how spatial and aesthetic elements in experience can intermingle.

Schafer gives noise four definitions, of which noise as “unwanted sound” is the oldest known and overall most satisfying since it acknowledges the subjective nature of noise: what is disturbing noise to someone might be a source of enjoyment for someone else. An example of this could be the sound of machines that for someone using them gives information about the functioning of the machine, but for a non-involved bystander might be a great cause of distress. Noise as “unmusical sound”, “any loud sound”, and as “disturbance in any signaling system” are Schafer’s other definitions in the context of soundscape studies.124

Noise as an experiential factor in environments has many effects. In particular high-intensity noise (usually considered to be over 95 decibels) can be truly dampening to any attempt at concentration. Creative work, for example, is especially vulnerable to distractions, even though a certain background noise might even be an advantage.125 This leads to both sensory and “attentional overload”126 and thus it seems reasonable to suppose that these kinds of overwhelming factors also hinder the aesthetically potent reactions an environment might otherwise be able to evoke. The simplest example could be a rock concert where the decibel level is significantly high, to a point where the music is not enjoyable any more. Another example can be a stroll in the park, where construction machines are at work and hinder the usual recreational and aesthetic absorption needed in order to enjoy the natural setting.

Differences in sensitivity explain some of the differences between how people experience sounds and noise, among other things. Habituation to certain noise levels is possible, although stress might still result from being exposed to it continuously. The accumulation of noise in chaotic environments is also called noise pollution. This is considered to pose a threat to the health and overall

125 For the effect that environment and spatial arrangements have on creative work such as writing, see e.g. Kellogg 1994.
well-being of an individual.

In urban built environments, total auditory solitude or silence, in other words, is hardly possible. Schafer points to the inescapable rise of “the ambient noise level of the modern city”, traffic noise in particular being responsible for this rise.\(^{127}\) The thickness of wall materials and their insulating capacities are tested in various situations of everyday life. From a distant resonating rumble to a full-blown noise attack, even the personal space of a home is often compromised by sounds from the outside world. Tiny leaking bits of noise or abrupt loud bursts mean sharing information about the lives on the other side of the wall. In this way, the privacy of those sharing the living spaces inside the same building becomes compromised.\(^{128}\) As Schafer describes it:

> Walls used to exist to delimit physical and acoustic space, to isolate areas visually and to screen out acoustic interferences. Often this second function is unstressed, particularly in modern buildings. Confronted with this situation modern man has discovered what might be called audioanalgesia, that is, the use of sound as a painkiller, a distraction to dispel distractions. The use of audioanalgesia extends in modern life from its original use in the dental chair to wired background music in hotels, offices, restaurants and many other public and private places. Air-conditioners, which produce a continuous band of pink noise, are also instruments of audioanalgesia. It is important to realize that such masking sounds are not intended to be listened to consciously.\(^{129}\)

He refers here to any sounds that are created in order to mask the fact that unwanted sounds inhabit and intrude in the most private spaces as well. The notion of audioanalgesia effectively describes the attempt to nullify the sense of disturbance by covering the sound by piling other sounds on top of it.

Aesthetically, unless noise is apprehended as a music genre,\(^{130}\) it already denotes

\(^{127}\) Schafer 1994, 185.
\(^{128}\) For a cultural history of eavesdropping, see Locke 2010.
\(^{129}\) Schafer 1994, 95–96.
\(^{130}\) For the use of noise in a musical context, characterised as a category or genre of “noise music”, or in a more general artistic context as “noise aesthetic” (e.g. Futurism and Dadaism), see e.g. Hegarty 2007 & Sangild 2002.
by definition an overall, or to a great extent negative aesthetic experience. In this sense, it seems alarming that “daily life is produced through, and intermittently punctured by noise. The sounds are always there, ‘unheard’, as a part of our habitually lived experience, and then, abruptly, they audibly impinge.”\(^{131}\) How this noise helps in orienting oneself in space is not easy to detect. However, we are habituated to the background hum of a certain noise level when moving about and making assessments and choices in everyday environments. This is not a minor factor in spatial experiences. One way to approach this problem is to focus on the fact that the level of noise is somewhat linked to the size of the space where it takes place. These spaces usually provide some kind of opportunity of escape when the sensory overload gets too intensive.

**Smell and Taste in Relation to Spatiality**

Smell and taste are traditionally considered the least spatial of the senses.\(^{132}\) The sense of smell has been traditionally and culturally considered a weak sense which appeals mostly to the more animalistic drives of the carnal body.\(^{133}\)

Smell and taste are strongly intertwined, and they both work mostly through the air that is being pulled through the cavities of the head all the way to the lungs. It is thus the very porosity of the body itself that makes it possible to differentiate between the substances that enter it. One can deduce directions from smells, as in tracing the path of a smell in space, for example when smells of cooking indicate the direction of the kitchen where food is being prepared. Or a lingering perfume can help detect the movements of a person in an enclosed space.

The senses of smell and taste let the environment directly enter the body, thus tying the sentient body to its surrounding material reality even more. Expansion of the lungs with each breath fills the body itself with minuscule particles from

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\(^{131}\) Hall, Lashua & Coffey 2008, 1020.

\(^{132}\) For the relation of the sense of taste to aesthetic experience, see Korsmeyer 1999a & 1999b; Sibley 2001; Brady 2005.

\(^{133}\) For an extensive account of the cultural significance of smell, see also Drobnick 2006.
the surrounding space. This cycle of expansion and contraction of the lungs is one of the bodily rhythms of a living organism such as a human being. They take place in almost any given place and situation. Breathing is a prerequisite for the organism to be and stay alive. It also constitutes a rhythm that, unlike a heartbeat, can be most often detected from the outside of the body, as an actual movement of the upper part of the torso.

The air that is breathed through the sensory organs also links an individual body to its environment with the ties of exchanged physical substances. Peter Sloterdijk captures this exchange as a physical merging and engagement of the body with the surrounding space with the example of blowing soap bubbles:

> While exhaled air usually vanishes without a trace, the breath encased in these orbs is granted a momentary afterlife. While the bubbles move through space, their creator is truly outside himself – with them and in them. In the orbs, his exhaled air has separated from him and is now preserved and carried further.134

The bubbles encase a space for the used air that has nourished the body and in the form of the bubble is made visible for a brief moment.

The nose adapts to smells very easily. The transitory nature of smells is often considered to diminish its meaning since smells literally evaporate into thin air. Culturally transferred meanings and memories are attached to a certain smellscape,135 but this has been a theoretically vague territory to analyse.136 Within the field of aesthetics, these sensory experiences related to the so-called “lower senses” have been gaining more interest within recent decades.137

Places often have characteristic smells that seem to belong to them in a sense that they are not even noticed after spending a while in the given space. In newly-built spaces, building materials can have very strong smells that range from natural (e.g. the smell of freshly cut wood) to more chemical ones (e.g. some plastics used as floor materials). These smells usually fade with time whereas

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134 Sloterdijk 2011, 18.
135 Also *odourscape*, see Porteous 1982.
136 For a cultural history of smell, see Classen, Howes & Synnott 1993.
137 See e.g. Brady 2005.
other characteristic smells tend to become stronger. Sometimes these kinds of either characteristic or temporary smells can be so strong and disagreeable that a person starts to avoid these places, and changes his or her routes in order to avoid the smells. This kind of “rerouting” happens more often than would seem likely and as a type of behaviour it is automatic to some extent. In any case, it is telling of the role that smells play in spatial experience.\textsuperscript{138}

Smells tend to remain stronger in small, confined spaces. Intensive smells can thus be associated with a smaller spatial scale, although this is not altogether obvious in all cases. The invention of hygiene as a practice and a ritual has diminished the amount of odour and made human environments more sterile for the sensory organs. On the other hand, people of a certain era and culture can be so used to the smells of their contemporary environments, such as different pollutants and chemicals, that they are not detected any more.

‘Nose-blindness’ regarding one’s own home is an especially prominent phenomenon. One gets so accustomed to the familiar olfactory microenvironment there that the individual can no longer distinguish even bad odours, let alone a certain characteristic smell. A place is marked with smells, even though one would not recognise those smells anymore. Environmental smells function in a somewhat similar way, even though much depends on how consistent the smells attached to a certain environment are.

Sometimes larger areas such as cities are affected by environmental smells originating from varying sources. For example, in southern Finland the small town of Valkeakoski was known until the end of the 1990s for its sulphuric smell reminiscent of rotten eggs on account of the fumes produced by the local paper mill factory. My childhood elementary school environment of Pyynikki in Tampere was often marked by the distinct smell of a brewery nearby. I have understood that the smell of Valkeakoski was pretty much a stable one, and its inhabitants got used to it, whereas the brewery smell spread around only once in a while causing the kids to wrinkle their noses in the nearby school yard. Nowadays, environmental smells have most probably become less invasive.

\textsuperscript{138} For the role of smell in the appreciation of gardens, see Tafalla 2014.
Industrial smells are more rare in city centres but some smells persist, such as
exhaust fumes, even though they too have changed as new petrol qualities and
filtering technologies have been developed.

In many cases, environmental smells evoke strong memories among those
whose lives have been bound at some point to places near the sources of these
smells. One has to keep in mind that the sense of smell varies a lot between
individuals and there is some evidence that there are gender-associated differences
in olfaction. Age and lifestyle factors (smoking, for example) also affect the sense
of smell surprisingly directly, yet the change might be difficult to assess even by
the individual and be manifested as a loss of appetite or other indirect result.
Degradation or even total loss of the sense of smell has wide consequences for
the individual’s well-being. On the other hand, oversensitivity to smells has
often been described as very debilitating, preventing people from going to
concerts, other public events or spaces, where the abundance of smells, usually
chemical-originated, is simply too much for the sensory system to take in.

Mould, mildew, and other problems related to air quality in buildings can be
sensed as a host of uncomfortable symptoms and smells. These kinds of allergic
or otherwise oversensitivity-related reactions are nowadays collected under the
loose description known as the Sick building syndrome (SBS).\textsuperscript{139} Hypersensitivities
of any kind unavoidably affect experience and thus eventually also the relation
to the space that houses the irritants causing them. At least in Finland air quality
issues have been a growing problem linked to some of the construction choices
typical to modernist architecture and especially their unsuitability to the at times
harsh Northern climate.

All in all, getting used to environmental smells might not directly affect
the spatial experience, but changes in olfactory experience strongly mark the
points of entering new areas in buildings and in cities, for example. It seems
likely that smellscape affect our relation to spaces on a much wider scale than is
consciously grasped. The practice of olfactory design takes into account the strong
associative power of smells, and the phenomenon of sensory adaptation is very

\textsuperscript{139} Braham & Emmons 2002, 302–303.
strong with smells. In perfume shops, for example, coffee beans are sometimes provided to be smelled in between different perfumes in order to “refresh” the nose. Otherwise the capacity to differentiate between olfactory stimuli is totally lost after a while when the sense of smell becomes “numb” and temporarily stops distinguishing different smells.

Apart from the sense of smell, taste seems to concretise in the “mouthfeel” as the texture perceived by the mouth, namely in how something is sensed in the mouth by its inner muscles and movements of chewing or sipping, for example. The act of eating in itself means literally chewing down bite-sized parts originating from the environment. Eating as an act consists of incorporating these parts into the ecosystem of one’s own body. Some aspects of eating disorders might be understood as a response to one’s anxiety-provoking and uncontrollable environment. At least for infants, the choice of putting or not putting something into their mouths can be the only way to gain a sense of control over their own environments. In the end, however, these formative spatio-dimensional exercises have probably less to do with actual spatial experience, unless one relates especially strongly to the story of Hansel and Gretel.

Proprioceptive and Interoceptive Senses

The so-called body senses overlap in part with the five main senses presented earlier, since they include touch, proprioception (referring to the perception of body position and movement), the vestibular system (which is located in the inner ear), the nociceptive system (the sense of pain), and the interoceptive system (which aims at maintaining the balanced homeostasis of the body by transmitting information about the physiological conditions when changes take place in the body).\textsuperscript{140} As their names imply, these are to be understood as more complex sensory systems, and they are not as clearly located in particular sensory organs of the body as the traditional five senses. Richard Shusterman,

\textsuperscript{140} Vignemont 2011.
for example, defines proprioception as one of the “somaesthetics senses” for this reason, since it does not concern a single sensory organ, but refers instead to the whole body as a perceiving organism.\textsuperscript{141} Body senses as such show a more holistic approach to the functioning of the body, one that complements the lacunae left by distinguishing the functioning of the perceptive system only by the traditional five senses.

Understanding the body as a spatially functioning entity becomes clearer when Bollnow while referring to Husserl points out quite predictably that “the natural zero point of experienced space” is to be located in the concrete human body. For him, this means in the “field of vision”, to be more exact.\textsuperscript{142} However, spatial experience is far more holistically somatic than Bollnow assumes throughout his analysis. By likening this vision-oriented perceived space to the experienced space Bollnow might be jumping to conclusions. Assuming that the limbs function in a regular manner and one makes an effort to distinguish the haptic aspects of the spatial experience, the “point zero” of perception seems to move towards the centre of the torso. The expansion of the rib-case at every breath, and the thumping of the heart when it makes space for a new amount of oxygen-filled blood also make the torso the inward-turned spatial centre of the body itself. Thus the hollowness and porosity of the body affects the experience of surrounding space since space is needed and used in multiple ways for the body’s sheer functioning in the first place.

This locus of experience in the body is not to be taken as a given or even as a normative experience. For example, one can have a sensation of “being nothing but a head”, when concentrated on intellectual work such as reading in a non-mobile position for a very long time. Another way of locating the centre of the body might perceive it as an axis going through the body, running through the upper parts of the body, the head and the torso, and its centre part changing according to the emphasis of the specific experience. Change, mutability, and an overall tendency towards balance are constantly present with perception as well

\textsuperscript{141} Shusterman 2012, 226.
\textsuperscript{142} Bollnow 2011, 55. The point between the eyes, at the root of the nose, where Bollnow places the zero point is close to the esoteric notion of “the third eye” of e.g. several meditation practices.
as other strongly bodily-originated or -related conscious activities.

Clarifying the role of mistaken perceptual assumptions might help in determining the relation that is formed with the environment via sensory cues. When the interpretation of sensory input goes awry, the perception of the surrounding space becomes misleading as well. When one misinterpretation is solved, it affects a chain of other conceptions, even though they as such might not have been mistaken to start with. This chain reaction beginning from mistaken perceptual cues can have massive perpetuating effects on the overall experience.

Barbara Montero describes proprioception as an aesthetic sense and thus as a medium for aesthetic experiences.\textsuperscript{143} Montero maintains, for example, that we can appreciate the beauty of another person’s movements because our inner senses recognise those very movements through the previous use of our own bodies.\textsuperscript{144} It represents in a way the same beauty we feel in the movement of our own bodies. The approach considering proprioception to be an aesthetic sense is relatively new, partly since proprioception in general has not been studied much. As a possible consequence, the visceral sense of the movements and positions taking place inside our own bodies can help in recognising parallels and reciprocal movement between our body and the surrounding world. The body’s relation with its environment is thus partly a result of a series of projections, of deductions based on innate proprioceptive sensing.

\textit{Kinaesthesia} refers to joint and muscle perception and is thus related to proprioception as an awareness of the body’s position and movement.\textsuperscript{145} Kinaesthesis is a kind of coordinating factor, using the information of all the senses, which adjusts and paces the use of muscles according to different purposes.\textsuperscript{146}

How body shape contributes to the perception of space is related to the forms which the body makes and how they are perceived in motion and change in time and in relation both to the self and the environment. Other comprehensive spatio-sensory elements of experience include muscle tension and duration of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{143} See Montero 2006a & 2006b.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} Montero 2006b, 231.
  \item \textsuperscript{145} For the complementary notion of \textit{visual kinesthesia}, see Gibson 1979.
  \item \textsuperscript{146} Gibson 1950, 224.
\end{itemize}
movement, for example in the gesture of hugging another person. Different kinds of differently motivated, both conscious and unconscious activities and environmental factors influence these changes in body shape and muscle tension and thus affect the form of the body and its operations in space. This is to say that they mould spatial experiences on a very visceral level.

The body’s alternating dimensions, the visible and felt shrinking and growing of its form affect in turn how the space is “lived in”. These changes in the body are attached to different feelings and emotion, such as comfort and discomfort or feeling secure. Somewhat surprisingly, the quality of spatial activity is greatly affected by muscle tension; partly this has to do with the human ageing process, and goes to remind us that, for example, children and old people have necessarily a very different experiential quality linked to their interaction with the environment. This is something that is increasingly taken into consideration on a practical level when designing spaces particularly for certain age or activity groups.

**Bodily Awareness**

It seems obvious that sensory awareness is also a precondition for experiencing the environment aesthetically, among other ways.\(^{147}\) Besides phenomenology, neuropsychology, psychiatry, and more recently cognitive neuroscience have tackled directly with the problem of bodily awareness. The notion of bodily awareness shares many traits from different philosophical debates on how the self, action, and space function. The external senses together with bodily sensations form bodily awareness.\(^{148}\) This perspective takes into account the materiality of the body and how it is to be understood as an integral and communicative part of forming the self.

Attention, consciousness, concentration, perception, and ultimately reflection are directed mainly to the outside of the body, at least on the most conscious level. Fingers and hands are the main body parts that “use” the sense of touch,

\(^{147}\) Berleant 1992, 14.
\(^{148}\) Vignemont 2011.
and the fingers and palms are contain areas of skin which are especially dense with touch receptors. The face, on the other hand, is the carrier of vision, taste, and smell. This concentration of the senses to certain areas of the body affect bodily awareness and partly explains the feeling that the sensory world is concentrated on the upper parts of the body and mainly to the front of the head.

A certain pre-attentive consciousness can be described to be in action in bodily awareness. One is conscious in this sense of the points of the body at any given moment. This consciousness seems to be heightened whenever any particular part of the body is at the centre of conscious attention or is working in order to create a pattern of movement, for example. Also, sometimes one can be remarkably absent-minded when it comes to one’s own body; in any act that requires intensive immersion the more comprehensive bodily awareness seems to fade away into the background. Conscious attention is then directed to other worlds that become ready for attention via the very limited movements of the eyes in the act of reading or engaging in a virtual environment, for example. One can of course snap out of this kind of immersion fairly easily, and then again become more aware of one’s body and its environment, especially if something sudden from the outside has caused this distraction.

Bodily sensations such as pain can trigger very sudden reactions. They can have their causes either outside or inside the body. Pain can be experienced as especially drastic though, when it is caused by something in the environment as in traffic accidents or otherwise physically invasive events. Different varieties of touch also belong to bodily sensations, which in general are contrasted with bodily feelings. These include such need-based signals as thirst, hunger, and being tired, which are felt quite generally all over the whole body. Bodily sensations instead tend to be sensed in a particular location of the body. Bodily feelings might sometimes be more predominant because of this, but often the difference in intensity is difficult to estimate. Especially pain can be a quite overwhelming

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149 Cole 1999, 3.
150 See O’Shaughnessy 2008.
151 See Armstrong 1962.
152 Vignemont 2011.
and totalizing experience even though its centre might be located in just one very specific part of the body.

Touch as such can be distinguished as a transitive bodily sensation with a clear object that causes the sensation. There are also intransitive bodily sensations which do not result from such a clear object.\textsuperscript{153} Tickles and itches fall into this category. Irvin’s example of scratching an itch as an aesthetic experience comes to mind when considering how these bodily sensations turn into more complex experiences. In the case of transitive experiences, something outside the body causes the experience of being touched in a literal sense. It can either be felt as a pleasurable nudge or as more of an intrusion. However, touch seems to be ambivalent in the sense that most often it is experienced as some combination of these two.

It seems that these experiences of being touched either become the centre of aesthetic experience directly or they are mediated by other experiences. Such is the case of spatial experience. It can be constructed of many transitive bodily sensations that “build up” the experience directly related to the surrounding space. This experience thus might (or might not) turn into a more complex aesthetic experience depending on the circumstances.

The role of bodily feelings for bodily awareness or more complex experiences is quite unclear, since their effect is largely unstudied. One could however imagine this to be linked to phenomena such as culinary pleasures being heightened and intensified when one is more hungry and sleep being all the sweeter when going to bed properly tired. Whether these experiences contain aesthetic elements and to what degree, is obviously a very complex matter of an altogether different conversation. In any case, understanding bodily awareness in its finer nuances and intrinsic differences is necessary in order to understand the chain of reactions that leads from external impulses and stimuli to the more conscious level of experience. It is the basis of all engagement with the environment and is crucial to aesthetic engagement as well since being bodily aware most often translates as heightened sensory attention and attunement to the sensory cues stemming from

\textsuperscript{153} Vignemont 2011.
the surroundings. The interoceptive system of the body moulds the experience in ways that are gradually becoming understood with the combined forces of philosophy and neuroscience.

It can be derived from multiple independent descriptions of bodily awareness distortions that one aspect of bodily awareness is “to experience one’s body as a whole in a specific location in the external space, which constitutes the centre of one’s visuo-spatial perspective on the world”.154 This goes to show how spatial experience and bodily awareness are closely linked and almost only a matter of different emphasis.

The phenomenology of bodily awareness within the sensorimotor approach is presented most notably in Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception (Phénoménologie de la perception, 1945). The sensorimotor approach emphasises the role of actions in understanding the lived experience of the body. Merleau-Ponty originally shifts the focus from an objectively treated body towards studying the lived and experienced body. This shift is essential for philosophical thinking in enabling a vast number of new perspectives approaching the study of the human body to start forming.

The approach to bodily perception and awareness introduced here takes into consideration the body and the lived experience tied to it through the body’s means of interaction with its environment, via the specific practical engagement the body has with the world. This takes place within what is again described as “the bodily space” which contains actions, gestures, and other manners of existing towards and with objects. This approach as a whole can be recognised also as a predecessor of the present embodied approach with its wider connotations.155

The practical consequences of bodily awareness extend to how well one is in possession of one’s sensory experience and what follows from that. This can mean training the skills necessary in refining the recognition and reflexes that follow from sensory input. A learned sense of coordinated balance transfers all the way to objects when one is in direct contact with them. An everyday example of this is in how well one can balance a cup of tea in one’s hand in the dark,

154 Vignemont 2011.
155 Ibid.
without relying on clear visual information about the position of the cup. It is thus worth emphasising that bodily awareness can be trained to some extent.

Somatic Experience and Pleasure

One fairly recent subfield of aesthetics that points towards more directly bodily conscious philosophy is Richard Shusterman’s *somaesthetics*. It aims at increasing body awareness, a crucial prerequisite for being able to qualitatively experience the body and its surrounding space. Shusterman calls the theoretical dimension *analytic somaesthetics*, which “describes the basic nature of bodily perceptions and practices and of their function in our knowledge and construction of reality”.

Shusterman explains that his theory of the body is very close to that which Michel Foucault describes in his *History of Sexuality* (*Histoire de la sexualité*, 1976, 1984). Foucault, however, can be criticised for dismissing smaller everyday somatic pleasure in favour of continuous intensification of somatic experiences. The pleasures derived from the surrounding everyday environment change according to the changes that take place in the surrounding space. The cultivation of bodily skills also regarding spatial experience is what is best illustrated by Shusterman’s approach.

Not just pleasure is derived or should be cultivated through somatic experiences. Tolerating uncomfortable situations or sensations or learning to find pleasure in some previously frightening experiences might result from somatic training too. In any case, acknowledging these sides which belong to the sphere of somatic experience is of great importance. This is also where a certain notion of ethics comes into the picture. Instead of simply striving for “feel-good” sensations, one can in other cases choose to endure, resist, or otherwise tolerate an ambiguous state in relation to surrounding spatial conditions. Shusterman clearly focuses on different aspects of pleasure and that gives his somaesthetics an intrinsically hedonistic tone. However, this can be acknowledged without

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157 Shusterman 2010, 541.
the presupposition that hedonism is intrinsically egoistic or somehow morally dubious. Somaesthetics presents us with many key notions on the relations between the body, the pleasures it produces and the well being of the mind. Its main offering is the incorporation of practical care of the self into philosophical discussion.

Foucault proposes an ethics of pleasure based on extremely intense bodily experiences that reshape the subject. However, Foucault’s description of the body mainly as political and shared leaves the question of privacy open. If even the body with its sensing organs is shared, is some nucleus left that is private or are there even any auxiliary concepts that could be used to define the fragments of the private amidst all this that is common and open? Reclaiming the subject’s privacy would thus be done in a new way, as its willing (if often submitting) participation with the body into the surrounding space. Somatic pleasures do not solely explain the pleasure derived from security or being in one’s own space, or arching over a distance to touch something. Somaesthetics is inclined to propose a cultivation of pleasure derived through discipline, which actually sets some boundaries to the cultivation of somaesthetic pleasures. Thus, according to this view, the level of a sensation harbours a possibility of somatic pleasure that in its turn opens up a way for aesthetic experiences.

It goes without saying that, besides pleasure, it would also be in order to address disgust more thoroughly as the opposite. Regarding spatial experience and how it influences the recognition of aesthetic qualities, one has to consider whether these bodily sensations cause pleasure that roots us to the environment or whether they cause disgust, or otherwise mainly negative effects that further distance us from the physical surroundings.

Shusterman’s somaesthetic project is exceptional in its focus on the body since it endorses the practice of actively and consciously cultivating skills associated with it. Shusterman sees his project as part of the reawakening of the Baumgartian direction in aesthetics.158 This task and direction are relevant indeed since gaining knowledge of one’s own body is commendable, if not essential for every

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human being.\textsuperscript{159} The practices of yoga, Pilates, acrobatics, and many other types of bodily training cultivate the sensory apparatus, both proprioceptive as well as interoceptive senses, increase kinetic control, and so on. Observing and sensing these signals and sensations in the body is part and parcel of spatial experience. It concerns cultivating communication \textit{with} one’s own body, not only \textit{through} the body, as the conventional habit is.

In the context of somaesthetics actual spatial experience is surprisingly little discussed. The concentration on the \textit{soma} and the body leaves implicit relations within the spatial sphere less articulated. However, in relation to architecture Shusterman does point out how “the soma provides the most basic tool for all spatial articulation by constituting the point from which the space can be experienced and articulated”.\textsuperscript{160} He also acknowledges that perceiving distance via movement, mass and volume, key principles of form, symmetry, and so on are based on the soma and it thus contributes as the main factor to “the lived experience of space”.\textsuperscript{161} The human form and functioning of the perceptual system are thus the basis for any spatial experience. Shusterman’s emphasis is obviously strongly on the somatic experience and he approaches the spatial experience with an approximation of which elements of the soma mostly contribute to that. The role of other factors such as the presence of other people, activity, and interaction, just to name a few, is less clear. Without delving deeper into somaesthetics as such, it is noted here as an important direction for understanding how our bodies function in space and how somatically and aesthetically better lives can be cultivated.

\textsuperscript{159} As a symptom of this, different kinds of meditation and mindfulness practices are currently gaining popularity.

\textsuperscript{160} Shusterman 2012a, 223.

\textsuperscript{161} Shusterman 2012a, 223–225.
Moving in Space

Over the past 100 years or so, the need for space has been well-acknowledged, documented, and researched and different kinds of evolutionary, physical, and psychological explanations have been given to explain the causes and effects of this specific need. Conceiving the world in terms of space requires taking into account the fact that experienced distances have also diminished drastically during the last 150 years with motorized vehicles, air travel, and space discovery. This calls for an even more expanded and diverse notion of spatial experience:

Different human behaviour corresponds to a different space, whether it is the geometrical space of the explorer, already extensively theorized, the aesthetic space of the individual who observes and perceives, or simply the endless expanse as the scope of the human appetite for adventure.¹⁶²

Movement consists most often of purposefully approaching “a spatially determined target”.¹⁶¹ Bollnow describes walking towards a certain direction and writes that back “is the road already travelled. It is no longer in one’s line of vision and it is as though it no longer exists.”¹⁶⁴ This is, however, not altogether true. What is behind might indeed be out of sight but one can still be very much aware of what is happening behind us. As the saying goes, one can for example “feel eyes on one’s back” and thus on some level be almost viscerally conscious of the activities taking place behind oneself. This again underlines how vision as such is very central for Bollnow’s understanding of spatial experience. However, it alone is not enough to explain how movement affects spatial experience.

The “forward-oriented” body forms a part of human being’s natural, physiological “affordance”¹⁶⁵ or propensity to be directed forward. This affordance in turn affects how environment is experienced. Movement is rectilinear in the

¹⁶² Bollnow 2011, 201.
¹⁶³ Bollnow 2011, 50.
¹⁶⁴ Bollnow 2011, 51.
¹⁶⁵ Affordance, a concept developed most notably by James J. Gibson, which in its original definition refers to the possibilities that the environment provides for interaction; Gibson 1977; Gibson 1979; Norman 2013.
sense that it “takes place only in the one-dimensional contrasting directions of forward and back.” In this context, Bollnow also traces metaphorical uses for the movement forward and back. Or, according to Bollnow, to a certain extent the “‘literal’ and ‘figurative’ meanings” merge to describe an almost existential condition of human being that for him crystallises in the concept of “the journey” \((homo viator)\). This metaphor and the literal meaning of the journey is also where spatiality and temporality particularly explicitly meet.

Bollnow also takes into account the most common impressions regarding space: “‘Space’ [...] means the room for movements, the elbow-room for movement.” This definition also points towards the central role of movement in defining space, and takes into consideration the spatially determined limits of the body. “Elbow-room” is literally always in reach of the touching and extending arm. It also refers to taking space by force, by elbowing others out of the way, or by sheer physical presence.

Bollnow adopts the term \textit{hodology}, which refers to the study of paths and pathways. A path or a road is symptomatic of having a certain direction towards which movement is heading. In this sense roads, “as a means for overcoming space, lead into the distance”.

This hodological space is from the start contrasted with abstract mathematical space. In mathematical space the distance between two points is determined only by their respective coordinates; it is thus an objective quantity, independent of the structure of the space lying between them. Hodological space on the other hand means the change that in concretely lived and experienced space is added to what we had already designated the accessibility of the respective spatial destinations.

Hodologically, it is possible to follow and define a “distinguished path” between two points instead of a straight line. This leaves more possibility of variation
and improvisation for the personal experience of space.

A maze of streets in a city starts to slowly build up into a coherent unity in the mind of a new inhabitant. When moving outside or even inside a house, one “is bound to certain predetermined possibilities”. Lifts and staircases offer “paths” for vertical movement inside buildings, and one rarely has any possibility of improvising besides these given ways of moving up or down. As relatively rare exceptions, some relatively new and markedly urban practices such as wall climbing or parkour challenge these habitual ways of moving in constructed spaces. Children are smaller in size and more adventurous and take much delight when they find unconventional ways of moving in and around built spaces.

Roads are concretely built to function as mediators between close and distant places. They combine the elements of movement and distance with an open end, and have always fascinated people. Navigation in space, the choice of a path or a road depends largely on personal preferences. A variety of possible routes in one’s mind dissects space into configurations that point out different kinds of possibilities for advancing in it.

Movement always implies a temporal dimension as well. In some cases this temporality attached to movement can be understood through the notion of rhythm. Henri Lefebvre describes the relation between rhythm and movement as such: “[r]hythm is often confused with movement, velocity or succession of gestures or objects”. Rhythm refers instead to the repetitive pattern and recurrent features of phenomena that are recognisable by their relation to a certain amount of change. As we learn further from Lefebvre, rhythm gains more importance in relation to everyday practices, since quotidian activities have a particular tendency to be defined by recurrent rhythms and patterns. The design and uses of everyday spaces are thus characterised by their propensity to harbour and enable a vast number of activities that follow certain rhythmic patterns.

Spatially experienced restrictive narrowness “always refers to the prevention

173 Bollnow 2011, 94.
174 For a cultural history of the elevator, see Bernard 2014.
175 See e.g. Ameel & Tani 2012.
of free movement by something that restricts it on all sides”. The blocking of movement by some external force or obstacle is always an intrusion, even if a minor one, to the private sphere of the individual. These inevitable “blockings” also structure the experienced space, direct attention within it, and thus affect the experience. This trait of the most practical quality is contrasted with the idea of an unrestricted horizon, which “is not anything within space, but belongs inseparably to the spatiality of human existence”.

Vision again is considered traditionally the most relevant sense in acknowledging movement. However, touch can also convey an areal sensation of movement through grasping objects around us that are not moving or move in a different pace to the body in movement. Haptically one can also feel the effects of movement such as the pressure of air that pulls one backward when travelling in an open vehicle. The internal senses of the body detect even the slightest shift in balance which takes place when either the body or its surroundings independently start moving. The loss of senses is almost always accompanied by strongly debilitating disorientation and misperception of movement.

177 Bollnow 2011, 86–87.
178 Bollnow 2011, 74.
III Personal, Private, and Intimate Space

The phenomenology of spatial experience is important since its focus is in mapping the unmediated human experience. This experience is seen as embedded and situated in a concrete environment, but this concreteness is always informed by varied teleological practices of the subject. This goes as a reminder of the more recent criticism towards phenomenology on the basis that “the phenomenologist’s picture of embodiment will accommodate the body as lived, existential project, but it will do so at the neglect of the material basis of aesthetic identity”.\(^{179}\) This is also why other approaches to spatial experience are taken into consideration here, in an attempt to fill in the gaps left by focusing solely on the phenomenological method.

On closer inspection, within the lived or experienced space, it is possible to distinguish qualitatively different spheres or zones. *Circumambient space*\(^{180}\) encompasses the body from all sides. Inside it, different zones of proximity to the body can be approximated according to the effect these distances have on the lived experience of space. The perception of space thus necessarily contains an element of innate egocentrism, since the perception is bodily based on a distinction between “here” and “there”. The space closest to the body is perceived differently than the spaces that are clearly further away. This is linked to the

\(^{179}\) Sparrow 2013, loc. 1033.
\(^{180}\) Tuan 2008, 41.
realisation that perceptually the environment appears to be “out there”.\textsuperscript{181}

On the other hand these kinds of zones can be understood as growing from the inside out, from the outwards expanding fields of action of the experiencer. This is most obvious when, for example, an infant acquires knowledge of the surrounding space. His or her territory expands slowly according to the gained new skills. New territory is covered in extending fields in distinct phases. Shape, size and texture of objects is learned initially by touch, this acquired knowledge being thus present in further experiences.

Sensory attention leads to sensory engagement, which already forms a notable part of aesthetic engagement. The degree of this attention depends on the distance to that which is the target of the attention. Not only physical distance but also the partly psychological reactions to the lived experience of space thus affect what level of engagement is possible in the first place. Some further questions however rise from these realisations. What do, for example, human spaces mean in the context of these specifically spatial or aesthetic experiences? What is the indispensable quality they offer to experiences that can be distinguished as personal, private, or intimate space?

Giving expression to the multiplicity of experiences is important since individual experiences are not idiosyncratic. Feelings and emotions concerning space together with different factors behind experiences, such as sensorimotor, tactile, visual, and conceptual are the reasons affecting the subtle changes in the sphere of experience.\textsuperscript{182} Acknowledging these different modes and understanding how they together contribute to the experience is crucial for understanding spatial experience in a way that can lead towards other, more complex experiences as well.

**Personal Space**

The topic or effect of some version of personal space is often implicitly present in theories of aesthetic experience and, more recently, that of aesthetic engagement.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{181} Gibson 1950, 227.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{182} Tuan 2008, 6–7.}
However, a comprehensive study of the meaning of personal space and of its consequences to the aesthetic experience seems to be lacking. One way to examine personal space in the sphere of aesthetics is to understand it as one key factor in everyday aesthetic experiences. Whether examining the experience of walking on the street, performing the tasks of cleaning or cooking or stopping off at an art gallery, the changes in the sphere of personal space can be attested to affect the overall experience. This effect is partly psychological but also something more and it can be shown that changes in the individual’s personal space have direct effects on the aesthetic experiences whether in the context of the everyday or the field of art.

A prominent definition of the concept of personal space comes from Edward Twitchell Hall’s notion of proxemics from the field of anthropology. Hall “examines humans’ use of space” in *The Hidden Dimension* (1966). Hall’s descriptions of “personal reaction bubbles” mark different kinds of categories of distance between individuals. Hall as an anthropologist is mainly interested in interpersonal relationships. He divides territorial spaces between individuals into four different categories: intimate, personal, public, and social. These categories describe the division of interaction distances between individuals. Instead of presenting public and social spheres here in more detail, I concentrate on the notion of private space. In a sense, it unites the experiential aspects of both the public and the social sphere from the point of the individual, it also has other connotations that are worth bringing into the discussion.

Interaction distance varies depending on many factors and the exact measuring of personal space can be quite challenging. Interaction distance spheres seem to change according to the situation and many cultural and individual variables. Individuals are also able to adjust quite flexibly to surrounding spaces and situations. However, some approximations have been made. Hall calculates, for example, that the so-called intimate distance is from 0 to 0.5 metres and is

183 Hall’s research was greatly influenced by Heini Hediger’s studies on animal behaviour, which he conducted with zoo animals in the 1950s. Different fields that have used Hall’s distinctions include psychology, communication studies, and organisational studies just to mention a few. See also Sommer 1969.

184 Madanipour 2003, 23.
intended for close relations, such as those with relatives or friends. The sphere of the actual *personal distance* spans from 0.5 metres to 1 metre. *Social distance* measures from 1 to 3 metres from the body and *public distance* from 3 metres upward. One has to keep in mind that these measures result from Hall’s original research from the 1960s and even though they are taken for granted in many subsequent studies they are still quite rough measurements and should be generalised with caution.

According to Hall’s research, two phases can be identified as belonging directly to personal distance: the so-called *close phase* (approximately 45 to 75 centimetres) and the *far phase* (approximately 75 to 120 centimetres).\(^\text{185}\) This set of distances constitutes personal space, which can be understood to be an extension of the body. Its size changes according to different situations or, for example, cultural differences. Physical domination of space, mental presence or even behaviour towards others in the sphere of this space does not solely explain its limits or how or whether it is perceived and experienced.

Spatial regulation of relationships between individuals happens to some extent in this personal sphere that is “emotionally charged”.\(^\text{186}\) Feeling secure, participating or being a part of a group are some reasons to stay in close proximity to others. On the other hand, there can be multiple reasons for leaving more distance between people. Abrupt intrusions into this space can lead to different kinds of reactions since privacy is usually a highly valued factor in the sphere of personal space. More complex social processes can transform someone’s personal zone into an element in a process of crowding or social isolation. Personal space, however, is not to be identified totally with the notion of privacy that also has other factors which contribute to it.

Hall uses the term *pre-cultural proxemics* of man’s sensory perception of space. This includes the haptic dimension of personal space. Tactile outlining of the environment happens partly on an imaginary level and is connected to the memories of previous tactile experiences. A vehicle is an extreme example of an extension of personal space where the actual haptic relation to the environment

\(^{185}\) Hall 1969, 112–114.
\(^{186}\) Madanipour 2003, 22–23.
is hindered. The confined space of a vehicle sets clear limits to the space. Yet being partly made of see-through glass it gives the illusion of transparency whereas at the same time it enables movement at high speed. The capsule-like miniature environment with its microclimate is clearly defined. Yet it is at the same time also part of the larger outside environment from which it is artificially segregated. The movement of a vehicle adds an extraordinary dimension to this version of personal space with the possibility of speed, acceleration and seeming fluidity of movement.

How do these notions of different types of distances and variations of personal space affect different types of aesthetic experiences? The problem is manifold and seems to entail bringing the perspectives of several different disciplines into the discussion. For example, in environmental psychology the term personal space is used to describe the field of space around the individual that he feels comfortable in. This comfortable space offers within itself possibilities of variations between closeness and distance. The term “comfort zone” is widely used in common speech and can be understood to be a kind of metaphorical version based on an experiential spatial zone.

In environmental psychology the two main functions of personal space are protection and communication. Environmental psychology charts different kinds of preferences. These descriptions are, of course, very useful in understanding the behaviour of people in group situations or, for example, judging successful building plans. However, the viewpoint of environmental psychology does not seem to take into consideration the individual’s proper experience of these situations. Its point of view is one-sided in the sense it does not give importance to the multiplicity of the individual’s other, often overlapping experiences, such as aesthetic experience.

Some other interesting uses of the notion of proxemics have developed since. Conforming to the original meaning of personal space Roland Barthes describes proxemics as concerning the use of space, specifically the closest space to be experienced. It is the “restricted space that immediately surrounds the subject”,

187 Sepänmaa 2003, 77.
188 Madanipour 2003, 26.
“the sphere of the immediate gesture” which forms the “dialectics of distance”.189 By these new directions and emphases, among others, the discussion on proxemic distances can continue to develop.

Obviously, there are multiple cultural differences in perceiving personal space.190 Many historical, traditional and even technological factors determine what amount of space is deemed sufficient for each purpose or person. Also gender roles and many intricate hierarchies in societies are reflected in the notion of what is personal and to what extent the personal even exists. However, there are strong reasons to believe that there are “shared traits that transcend cultural particularities” and they thus “reflect the general human condition”.191 These shared traits can be traced back partly to the experience of space, the common perceptive mechanisms and how they form a scale, measure and direction to space that has the perceiving and experiencing person as its focal point.

Why is it necessary to bring the notion of proxemics back into the discussion? In my view, there are many relevant parallel points in which proxemics can help in understanding how space is experienced. The organisation of personal space, for example, can be understood to be some kind of reflection of a person’s inner state and relations between people. The sphere of personal space contains the motivation, the attempt and ultimately the act of reaching out to further spheres in the surroundings. The further effects of personal space extend to many different areas of ordinary everyday life. For example, in open house viewings one gets a glimpse of how other people live, and how they have arranged their home that serves as the epicentre of their everyday with its particular features. Situations such as this – semi-voluntary glimpses into the lives of others – no matter how interesting, often arouse a very clear sense of intrusion into other person’s personal space. The sphere of the home is thus experienced as a very private extension of this space, and even though the homeowner is not present in the situation, his or her objects emanate this sensation of belonging to the

189 Barthes 2002, 155–156.
190 E.g. “eruv” in the Jewish tradition, see Miller 2006. See also Gehl 2001.
191 Tuan 2008, 5.
most personal sphere of lived space.\textsuperscript{192}

\textbf{Private Space}

Spatial expansion of an individual or individually felt area that Bollnow also describes, can be deduced to refer either to concepts differing on such a large scale as between “homeland” and “house”.\textsuperscript{193} In this sense space becomes representational of a more complex set of elements of different processes such as identity building. This is somewhat closer to the concept of place than space, since it is essentially linked with dwelling. Bollnow describes distinct areas within each other and the double movement of going away and returning that takes place between these areas. The inner area is likened specifically to home or house and the outer represents anything that resides outside one’s house or home.\textsuperscript{194}

“In the vulnerability of the dwelling – in relation incidentally to a general protection of the human ‘intimate sphere’, in the secrecy of the post and so on – there is a suggestion of a peculiarly sacred character.”\textsuperscript{195} The sacred character and particular vulnerability are obviously in relation to the atmosphere of privacy that protects the most intimate sphere. It is precisely “the need to be alone with oneself that leads us to retreat into our houses and lock ourselves in”.\textsuperscript{196} The sense of control comes from being able to close the doors and by this gesture to shut the public sphere of life periodically outside.

In everyday language, private space is strongly associated with property. The issues of privacy and private space often concern values tied to ownership, both material and immaterial. It thus belongs under jurisdiction in a way that

\textsuperscript{192} This description referring to Dickensian characters and their homes suits these experiences as well: “We encounter a person-and-habitat, and form a view, which usually goes untested and uncorroborated but makes some sort of impression – maybe welcoming, maybe disturbing. If we are not particularly interested or alert, then the impression may seem unremarkable, but if we really want to know the person then the habitat will be full of clues about the character.” Ballantyne 2012, 108.

\textsuperscript{193} Bollnow 2011, 80.

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{195} Bollnow 2011, 134.

\textsuperscript{196} Bollnow 2011, 149.
not many spatial phenomena do. Depending on the context, private space can be understood as its owner’s intrusion into the public sphere and serve as a segregating factor between people. Ownership is also a political question. One notable example of these political, social, and gender-related connotations is Virginia Woolf’s famous plea for a woman to have “a room of one’s own” in order to write.\textsuperscript{197} It seems that these different notions of privacy are sometimes difficult to discern and that private experience can easily be confused with its public expression.

People have a tendency to create small yet indispensable amounts of private space even in turbulent and most overpopulated places. This is especially visible in spaces where one is confined to stay for any longer time, such as in airplanes during long-haul flights or in transit areas of airports. Small nooks and shelter-like formations can in themselves satisfy the need to be in peace and not visible to others even when they are still at the same time in close proximity to them. More drastic measures are taken when, for example, families in disaster areas are provided with their own small private space immediately after the most urgent needs of water, food, and sanitation are fulfilled.\textsuperscript{198} These adjustments secure the minimum level of privacy, without which the loss of dignity starts disassembling slowly the layers that form a civilised and cultured citizen.

“When residential walls were erected it was the beginning of truer and deeper forms of intimacy.”\textsuperscript{199} This is represented by architecture, for example in the Chinese courtyard style which has no windows to the street and can be contrasted with the all-exposing outer walls made of glass in contemporary Western architecture. Intimacy and selectivity are linked, both experientially and in spatial design. A certain “comfort distance” to other inhabitants, however, can be distinguished. The walls in an apartment building, for example, provide a necessary insulation against the life of others being exposed to an untenable extent. If the walls were removed, we could see that people actually inhabit their

\textsuperscript{197} Woolf 2012.
\textsuperscript{198} For more on the hierarchy of needs, see Maslow 1943. For the implications of the phenomenological understanding of spatial experience to human rights, see Seamon 2013.
\textsuperscript{199} Locke 2010, §.
home spaces in extremely close proximity to each other, a fact that the mere existence of walls makes everyone forget. The very feeling of intimacy is balanced by curiosity fed by the walls and the private spaces they create.

The idea of capsule and pod hotels originates from Japan and epitomises an extremely economic and efficient use of space for sleeping, relaxing, or working in privacy. Outside of Japan, capsule hotels are considered a somewhat extreme example of using space but in the context of a very densely populated country it does no appear so odd at all. These kinds of spaces remind one that on some occasions a physically demarcated and shielded private space can indeed be created within densely populated spaces. Besides clearly demarcated spaces, spatial privacy is also connected to certain types of actions and behaviour deemed private that stir emotions and strong reactions when performed in public.

Solitude and privacy are necessarily linked. Solitude implies a somewhat private experience, but privacy, on the other hand, does not always entail solitude. Identity is connected in many ways to the feelings of privacy. How spatial privacy enforces identity and what relevance aesthetic experience has in this process is not in the scope of this dissertation but is mentioned here as an example of how the sphere of spatial experience could be more thoroughly appropriated.

The sociologist Richard Sennett distinguishes between different forms of withdrawal from the company of others: solitude, isolation, and loneliness. Voluntary solitude is often understood as an ultimate plea for privacy in its most concrete form. As Sennett reminds us, monks and prison inmates have necessarily a very different take on solitude. Much of how it is experienced depends on whether it is a chosen, voluntary state. Sennett’s main idea about living together emphasises that it is a skill that has to be learned. Only in that way can a necessary amount of privacy be guaranteed. This relation between

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200 As Slavoj Žižek recounts somewhat provocatively in an interview: “Friends told me that the latest trend, at least in Europe, is public sex. They showed me some clips, and they’re terrifying. A couple enters a streetcar, half-full, simply takes a seat, undresses, and starts to do it. You can see from surprised faces that it’s not staged. It’s pure working-class suburb. But what’s fascinating is that the people all look, and then they politely ignore it. The message is that even if you’re together in public with people, it still counts as private space.” Cohen 2013.

201 Sennett 2012, 182.

202 Ibid.
privacy and co-operation or co-presence is of key importance when considering the conditions from which aesthetic experiences can arise.

**Intimate Space**

The innermost circle of personal space described by Hall is called the intimate space, the sphere of touch.\(^\text{203}\) As has already been emphasised earlier in this study, the sense of touch is vital to living organisms. Without touching or being touched a human being withers away and ceases to exist. Even in a case of a numb limb or partial or total lack of this central sense, a person is in the world through both the receiving sense and the act of touching.

Such basic functions as standing or sitting are not possible without an act of touching the ground beneath the feet or the surface of a chair. Feeling gravity pushing one’s feet towards the floor or the sitting bones pressing solidly against the upper layer of a chair is physics transmitted to a form that is sensorally perceivable for a human being. Pressure, temperature, and surface qualities such as softness, smoothness, hardness, or coarseness are felt in degrees depending on the part of the body that is in touch with the perceived object.

In relation to the body of another human being, whether the warmth emanating from it is sensed, marks the starting of intimate space. This intrusion of sensory information to the *bodyspace* also concerns other senses, in the form of smells, blurred vision from close proximity, and hearing the slightest of sounds produced in the immediate proximity of the body.\(^\text{204}\) Contemporary studies on bodyspace emphasise this relation of the body to the intimate spatial sphere. Since intimate space is also closely associated with the territory of gender issues, one important line of research concentrates on showing how implicit engendered knowledge is being performed and represented within this sphere.\(^\text{205}\)

\(^{203}\) Hall 1969, 110–112.
\(^{204}\) Hall 1969, 109.
\(^{205}\) Feminist theorists such as Susan Bordo, Elizabeth Grosz, and Elizabeth Teather question the normativity of the male body and call for a more varied view to replace the binary oppositions implicit in how body and spatiality is understood. See e.g. Duncan 1996; Grosz 1994.
Clothes touch the body but skin is usually used to being covered. Sometimes a piece of clothing can feel too tight or its material itchy. Then one suddenly becomes uncomfortably aware of having something touching and pressing against one’s skin. A traditional Finnish textile company Finlayson claims as its official slogan that “you need something soft between you and the world”. This need for an intimate “bumper zone” or limit between the world and oneself is not a matter of pure luxury. It concerns providing a shield against the unpredictable tumults of the world, thus allowing for the intimate to stay truly intimate. In this way clothing shields, protects and also covers the body; it is a representation and, at the same time, the actual location of the intimate when this space between the cloth and the skin is created.

Whether caused by an object made from inanimate material or another live creature, intrusions into the intimate sphere seem to cause fairly direct emotional reactions. Touch feels either pleasurable or instantly detestable. It is either welcome or something rejectable. As many everyday spaces are shared with others, these intrusions into the intimate sphere take place constantly. Either people that we know or complete strangers brush against our sides in crammed buses, push their shopping carts into our calves, or in rarer cases, unexpectedly reach to touch us in order to say something or stop us. In a similar way we sometimes manage to run accidentally into inanimate objects such as revolving doors or, in some of the most unfortunate cases, moving vehicles.

Yet it is not only health that is under threat in these cases when breaking into the intimate zone, but also something more profound. The very state of selfhood depends to some extent on identifying with these boundaries of the body and that which immediately surrounds it. Thus transgressions to this intimate spatial sphere are an efficient and unfortunately common choice as different forms of humiliation and abuse. This does not concern merely disgracing and stripping

206 More from Finlayson’s official website: “Everyone knows what clean sheets feel like against the skin. Everyone knows the feel of a freshly-washed terry towel after a sauna and the comforting weight and warmth of a bathrobe on a winter’s evening.” This describes aptly (even though composed for branding and marketing purposes) how intimacy and tactile pleasure are connected even in the most ordinary everyday experiences. http://www.ilovefinlayson.com/us-as-a-company/finlayson-oy
bare the body but also peeling away into nonexistence the protective thinner than thin layer of space that is needed between a human being and the world.

**Personal, Private, and Intimate Spaces in Everyday Environments**

Organising things, generating order from disorder, unclutter from clutter, is a necessary part of everyday life and actions whether we like it or not. On many levels, this constant organising permeates life and the everyday. Cleaning and organising one’s home thus becomes finally an act of creating a living space by means of order. Bollnow clarifies the spatial nature of this activity:

> Ordering space means that with conscious deliberation, I assign a place in a space or a container to every object, to which from now on it belongs, and to which I will always return it after I have removed it to make use of it.\(^{207}\)

Organising as an activity is thus vital for a human being in order to function in a coherent way in the everyday. It also continually redefines the boundaries of personal, private, and intimate space as objects define and belong to these spheres. Bollnow continues by stating that “the totality of ordering of places on the one hand and my room to manoeuvre on the other together, in exact correlation, determine my space of action”. Thus, the space of action is “totally shaped in purposeful human action”.\(^{208}\) This is especially true when examined in the context of everyday environments such as home, the office, or other such reasonably familiar spaces.

The experience of personal space is to a large extent affected by other senses than vision – by touch and smell, for example. Also variations of less conventional ways of using the senses, such as peripheral vision, for example, play an important role.\(^{209}\) It is thus not only intentional attention that is linked to the perception and acknowledgment of personal space. Unintentional, less conscious

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\(^{207}\) Bollnow 2011, 196. For “domestic aesthetics” more specifically, see also Lee 2010.

\(^{208}\) Bollnow 2011, 199.

\(^{209}\) See e.g. Pallasmaa 2005a & Pallasmaa 2005b.
ways of perceiving define our relation with that which immediately surrounds us. Perception affects how identity is formed and moulded in relation to the experienced space. What are the boundaries of my action in the context of this space? How do I define to what extent this space is under my control? These kinds of questions are rarely consciously enounced in everyday situations, but they still have to be grappled with to some extent according to the changes in the surrounding space.

Spatial proximity is necessary for “easy accessibility” to objects and Bollnow defines “the space of action” comprising “the totality of places which include the objects of use around the working individual”. Referring to the working individual also already points to the sphere of the everyday, towards spatiality understood via actions and functions of the everyday instead of distanced introspection of spatial conditions and their possible effects and possibilities. In this sense Bollnow uses the notions of “space of action”, “ergological space” or “active space”.

Bollnow quotes Heidegger distinguishing the difference between “spatiality of the ready-to-hand within-the-world” and “spatiality of being-in-the-world” “where the nearness and direction of thing to their places correspond to the new characters of ‘dis-stance’ [Entfernung] and ‘orientation’”. Relating to objects through their “being-at-hand” is related also to their affordance, understood as their propensity to being used. This leads one to immediately consider the commonly considered principles of good design. From design perspective, a strong, practical haptic relation is linked to objects; this is often described as “affordance” or as their propensity for use.

Everyday aesthetics as a subfield of environmental aesthetics brings the everyday into the focus of philosophy. The quotidian experience of space is characterised by well-known, habitual, and routinely performed acts. Ruptures in the safety net formed by everyday actions and breakings of the routine underline
the habitual nature of the everyday. A malfunctioning lift stuck between floors, for example, can make one painfully aware of the necessity of having access to a normally functioning lift, no matter how slow or tiny that might be.\footnote{Cf. the part of Heidegger’s “tool analysis” in which he describes how unusable tools become conspicuous; Heidegger 2010, 72.}

Not only the unusualness of a broken lift, but also the pure fact of being shut up in a small space without precise knowledge of the duration of the situation can cause anxiety of unbearable dimensions. Spatial anxieties have been grouped mainly under two different categories since the 19th century: \textit{agoraphobia}, is related to large, open spaces, whereas the later diagnosis of \textit{claustrophobia} as the fear of small, confined spaces has even been associated with the invention of the lift. In German, these two forms of anxiety are linked under a common name of \textit{Platzangst},\footnote{Bernard 2014, 205.} which underlines their spatial nature.

As these examples show, the lift is in any case a strange kind of non-space. It is debatable whether it belongs even properly to a part of a house, but is more like a moving and connecting receptacle situated between different solid spaces. The complex nature of this specific transitory and relatively tight space has since its invention caused uncertainty when it comes to knowing how to behave in the intimacy it inevitably creates. The exceptionality of the situation of getting trapped in a lift highlights for once how the everyday relies on many technical, mechanistic, or otherwise smoothly functioning moments that follow each other in a preordained succession without us having to give a thought to them.

Functional spaces that connect bigger and more prominent spaces, such as corridors, hallways, staircases, and the aforementioned lifts function markedly as in-between spaces inside or between larger entities of built spaces.\footnote{For \textit{junkspace} as the less noble “residue” of architecture linked to the modernisation process, see Koolhaas 2002.} They exist in order to allow movement from one space to another. Even apartment buildings that are built to house a great number of people in a sort of communal way of living have plenty of spaces where one does not expect to encounter other people. These spaces include the storage room, the roof, the attic, and staircases, for example, at least in many less populated and thus quieter buildings.
Mobile vehicles offer many interesting examples of how private space is integrated with public space. In some instances this difference is more pronounced and in others, a subtler nuance denotes the exchange between diverging spheres. For example, the very markedly private space of a vehicle gets entangled with that of others in the form of a wider concentration of traffic. The point of views of ecology and privacy are contradicted when, as unfortunately is often the case, one person guides a vehicle and the rest of the space is empty. In contrast to this, the friction between public versus private axis of space becomes easily juxtaposed in the phenomenon of public transport. The fairly confined space is shared with strangers and the personal space of each individual passenger is cut to the bare minimum for the duration of the commute.

Spaces Created by Light

Light is distinguishable for the human eye as an electromagnetic field that divides space into distinct visually diverged areas. The rectilinearity of light rays is the physical precondition directly affecting the depth of vision. 216 When darkness abounds, “it is only a vague proximate zone that is recognizable”. 217 Light is affected by different kinds of materials in different ways: it can be reflected or absorbed depending on where its rays are directed. The contrast between light and shade implies usually an obstacle, a physical barrier that defines the sphere of light at some distance from its source. In architectural spatial analysis isovist can be defined by a source of light as the light coming from a distinct point illuminates the volume of space.

Light also exposes only certain sides or aspects of objects, while other sides stay hidden in the shadow. In a way, light moulds or carves objects out of a given space, especially if combined with the movement of either the object, perceiver, or the source of light. Space has, and stays, in a sense, “retreated behind the

216 Bollnow 2011, 203.
217 Bollnow 2011, 212.
boundaries of the bright area”. Light operates in space insofar that it is optical space. If vision is excluded, only the warmth emanating possibly from the source of light can be perceived.

Sensorially, less hapticity is involved in cases where light defines space. The contours are moulded by something immaterial, or non-material in the sense that it is undetectable to the haptic register of our sensory apparatus. These cases thus form an exception for spatial experience, and as such, a particularly fruitful opportunity to assess the overall experience and how and whether it turns into an opportunity to appreciate the possibly present aesthetic potentialities.

Light separates and binds together objects forming condensations and arrangements in space. This feature of light is generally effectively used in architecture. Also buildings as such are immense objects that react to and are affected by the changing natural and artificial lighting conditions outside. The intricate “light work” of the inside of a building affects the moods and life of the people living and working inside it. Artificial electric lighting has since its invention affected in many ways the rhythms of human life and thus also the uses and experiences of different spaces.

*Everyday habits* are also essential in spatial orientation in perceptually changing conditions. Even in darkness or otherwise weakened visual conditions in well-known spaces, the familiarity of objects and their places helps in locating them and performing daily tasks as usual. According to the changing times of day, the appearance of familiar things changes slightly yet expectedly since this is a repetitive change to which we are accustomed:

> It would be wrong to look at night space merely as a deprivation of day space caused by a lack of full visibility and the possibility of localization. Rather, night space has its very own character, which needs to be recognized.

The opacity of darkness gives it a “more material” sense than what can be attributed to light and bright conditions, implicates Bollnow quoting Minkowski.

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218 Bollnow 2011, 214.
219 For Roland Barthes’ description of this, see Barthes 2002, 155.
220 Bollnow 2011, 212.
The notion of mingling with space is related to this phenomenon of the almost palpable quality of darkness.\textsuperscript{221} However, Bollnow does not take into account the changed auditory landscape of nighttime. In natural, city or home environment the soundscape and its perception changes according to the times of the day. Not only is the soundscape different during the night but also the attention it gets when other perceptual impulses have changed as well and sensibilities are directed in other ways. This affects the experience immensely.

In a forest vertical tree trunks block the visibility in an obstructing way that Bollnow refers to as a “twilight space” of semi-clarity between total clarity and space wrapped in darkness. The materiality of a forest creates a sort of inner space impenetrable to the gaze and which encloses man inside it. The material thickness can thus be both sheltering and obstructing as it creates special conditions for both perception and movement. Also the sense of direction is easily disturbed in the uniformity of forest space without clear landmarks. These features contribute to both the fascinating and the somewhat oppressive, uncanny atmosphere characteristic of forests.\textsuperscript{222}

The phenomenon of twilight in natural environments underlines the change of the times of day. According to some often-used metaphors, darkness is described as wrapping everything inside it, whereas the light of the sun illuminates even the most hidden and secret corners.\textsuperscript{223} In built environments, windows, doors, and other openings in the outer crust of the building let in light from the outside, whether from a natural source in the form of solar light and heat or of artificial origin such as the gleam of streetlights. The larger these glazed or open surfaces are, the more the interior space is considered to be in interaction with the outside.\textsuperscript{224} What this means precisely for the people in the inside or outside space, depends more on changing factors on each occasion but the possibility to “see through walls” inevitably affects the way these built yet visually open

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} Bollnow 2011, 213.
\item \textsuperscript{222} Bollnow 2011, 204–206; see also Bachelard 1994, 185–188.
\item \textsuperscript{223} See also Merleau-Ponty 2002, 330.
\item \textsuperscript{224} The traditional Chinese and Japanese paper windows illustrate an exception to this since they let through only some light besides sound and heat and thus maintain privacy by blocking a clear visual exchange between spaces.
\end{itemize}
spaces are experienced.

Junichiro Tanizaki presents in his renowned essay “In Praise of Shadows” (1933) a comparison of light and darkness that gains an almost metaphorical dimension. Light emphasises the experience of nuances in spaces since it in itself is already a phenomenon which is nuanced on a fine scale:

Whenever I see the alcove of a tastefully built Japanese room, I marvel at our comprehension of the secrets of shadows, our sensitive use of shadow and light. For the beauty of the alcove is not the work of some clever device. An empty space is marked off with plain wood and plain walls, so that the light drawn into it forms dim shadows within emptiness. There is nothing more. And yet, when we gaze into the darkness that gathers behind the crossbeam, around the flower vase, beneath the shelves, though we know perfectly well it is mere shadow, we are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquility holds sway.225

Another description, of special interest here, follows further on. It is of a teahouse in Kyoto that no longer existed when Tanizaki was writing:

On the far side of the screen, at the edge of the little circle of light, the darkness seemed to fall from the ceiling, lofty, intense, monolithic, the fragile light of the candle unable to pierce its thickness turned back as from a black wall. I wonder if my readers know the color of that “darkness seen by candlelight”. It was different in quality from darkness on the road at night. It was a repletion, a pregnancy of tiny particles like fine ashes, each particle luminous as a rainbow. I blinked in spite of myself, as though to keep it out of my eyes.226

These excerpts that seem poetic and nostalgic musings on old times, are actually quite apt descriptions of how light moulds space and creates a certain tender atmospheric space around itself. Darkness acquires a certain heavy thickness, into which light penetrates except when it is not strong enough. Tanizaki also writes about how the invention of electricity changed how materials looked and

225 Tanizaki 2001, 32–33.
226 Tanizaki 2001, 52.
the overall impression of Japanese architecture. In the same way, now cityscapes and roads by night have been changed drastically when cold LED lights have replaced warmer, yellow-toned high-pressure sodium lights in such epic city night landscapes as in Los Angeles.227

I have a vivid memory from childhood of the exhilarating sensation of running down a small hill in total darkness in the Finnish countryside on a dark night late in the summer. The steep hill was very familiar to me with its cartway and a slight curve to the right, so I was pretty sure I would not stumble on it even if I could not see my feet. Usually the stars gave some light, but on this one particular occasion etched in my memory, the whole region was pitch black. The darkness was almost palpable; it felt like something apt to arouse the sense of touch more than the sense of vision, which was rendered totally useless. This kind of experience is probably possible only in rural environments in which there are less changing and unexpected elements. One could be fairly certain of not colliding with anything since the cartway was very rarely used.

Our relation to lighting is also largely based on habits. Some people turn on all of the lights immediately when they get home. I have grown accustomed to appreciating dim lighting, especially in the winter mornings, since dim lighting is much gentler than harsh electric lights that are usually considered to be efficient in waking one up. For people living in Finland and other countries near the Arctic Circle, the stark contrast in lighting between the seasons is probably even more difficult to adjust to than the difference between summer and winter temperatures. One might argue that it is the lack of light that diminishes the “territory” of people in winter, whereas summer light opens up the possibility of staying out longer and widening one’s life into the countryside and other places where one feels lost and isolated in the dark of winter.

In contemporary workspaces, ample, sharp, and abundant lighting is considered to be a proof of the efficiency of the work and procedures taking place there. Light undeniably stimulates the brain, but it is rarely considered whether this kind of stimulation is really even profitable for all kinds of work let alone

227 For the effect this will have on films which have the city as their setting, see Kendricken 2014.
whether it is experientially pleasing. Nowadays, the omnipresence of diffuse light in urban spaces does not allow for the creation of separate areas in- and outside of the beam of light. Suffused light in home environments might affect the changing rhythms and habits of life. Most recent studies claim that blue light specifically emanating from the multiple bigger and smaller screens used at home and in workspaces physiologically affects sleeping patterns and causes extra alertness. Light is thus a central factor in moulding not only the spaces of the everyday but also the habits that affect the ways these spaces are used.

Related to the aforementioned concept of proxemics, Barthes describes how the sphere of light encloses one who is sitting in an armchair and reading a book under a lamp. The reach of light defines the boundaries of this small intimate or personal space and also marks off the area of immediate surroundings that is left in the dark. This happens partly because of what goes on in the sphere of the senses, as in an otherwise dark room vision cannot extend much beyond the rays that the light casts. Darkness does not offer many sensory impulses and thus the situation makes possible the total concentration and engagement in the activity, in this case reading a book in solitude. Thus Barthes adopts proxemics, which has mainly been used to examine interhuman relations, to describe relations between the individual and objects in the immediate surroundings. This is in an interesting turn since it widens the scope of distance versus proximity to concern the relationship of individuals to objects and more broadly whole environments. In the case of the lamp certain aspects seem to point towards the shaping of an atmosphere or other type of aesthetic evaluation of the environment that is based on objects.

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228 See e.g. Holzman 2010.
Mood and Atmosphere

Darkness, twilight and other general light-related conditions that are different from the normative conditions of bright daylight or artificial lighting emphasise the changing nature of the world as it appears to us. The Heidegger-influenced architect Peter Zumthor muses on atmosphere:

We perceive atmosphere through our emotional sensibility – a form of perception that works incredibly quickly, and which we humans evidently need to help us to survive. Not every situation grants us time to make up our minds on whether or not we like something or whether indeed we might be better heading off in the opposite direction. Something inside us tells us an enormous amount straight away. We are capable of immediate appreciation, of a spontaneous emotional response, of rejecting things in a flash.230

This can be interpreted to be a reference to the relatively vague notion of atmosphere as an explanatory factor for special spatial experience conveyed by architecture. Zumthor describes this sensibility linked to perceiving an atmosphere to be a vital survival skill: intuition plays a key role in detecting whether a space is profitable for one’s well-being.

In relation to this, Bollnow borrows from Ludwig Binswanger the concept of mood space (gestimmter Raum) that is “an aspect of how we look at space”. It is of central importance in understanding experienced space according to Bollnow, since mood “concerns the individual in his still undivided unity with his surroundings”.231 Mood is thus some unstructured aspect of the reciprocal relationship between space and the human being. There is an almost uncannily strong “reciprocal influence” between a surrounding space and the mood of a person.232

Bollnow and Zumthor’s remarks are well complemented by Gernot Böhme’s

232 Bollnow 2011, 216. For more specifically on the affective dimension of architectural space, see Perez de Vega 2010.
thoughts on mood:

Space is genuinely experienced by being in it, through physical presence. Since the simplest and most compelling means of ascertaining our bodily presence in space is movement, those elements of vision that contain motion – changes of perspective and focal point – are best suited to conveying an impression of space. But seeing itself is not a sense that defines being-in-something but rather a sense that establishes difference and creates distance. There is another sense specifically for being-in-something; it is a sense that might be called “mood”. A mood contributes to sensing where we are. By feeling our own presence we feel the space in which we are present.\(^{233}\)

Mood is thus linked to the connection that one intuitively makes between one’s own physical presence and the way it resides in a given space. This recognition of one’s presence has a sense of almost looking at the situation of being situated in space from the outside. As Böhme continues, this implication is strengthened:

Our presence, where we are, can also be topologically understood as a determination of place. Indeed, sensing physical presence clearly involves both physical distance from things, whether they are oppressively close or very remote, and also spatial geometry, in the sense of a suggestion of movement, reaching upwards or bearing down. But a sense of “whereness” is actually much more integrating and specific, referring, as it does, to the character of the space in which we find ourselves. We sense what kind of space surrounds us. We sense its atmosphere.\(^{234}\)

As already previously discussed, the changing conditions of day and night offer one way of approaching the atmospheric differences in spatial conditions that occur on a repeated basis. Night with its darkness makes space seem quite different from “the clear and visible space of daytime”.\(^{235}\) Within this inherent rhythm and change in the position towards the sun by the movement of the earth we take daytime to be the normative situation and as such, an evident

\(^{233}\) Böhme 2002, 402. See also Böhme 1995.

\(^{234}\) Ibid.

\(^{235}\) Bollnow 2011, 201.
starting point for assessing spatial experience.

Daytime – or night with sufficient artificial lighting – is when not only objects but also the space between objects is seen: “I see objects with their sharp contours, but I also see the gaps that separate them. I see not only the objects but also the empty space that lies between them.”\textsuperscript{236} Thus the division of space between mass and open, “empty” space is distinguishable for observation. Bollnow adds also, referring to Minkowski, that this “bright space” is more specifically the space that is shared with other people and that because of “this communal sense” private areas need to be created within it.\textsuperscript{237} This interesting notion needs further investigation as behind it is to be found one of the central motives of this whole study.

\textsuperscript{236} Bollnow 2011, 204.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid.
IV Embodied and Engaged Interaction with the Environment

Embodiment and enactivism theories complement in a very wide sense that which has been previously clarified concerning spatial experience. It is now in order to shortly introduce some of the main points of this perspective since they are importantly related to the following theme of aesthetic experience described specifically as engagement.

According to some views, aesthetic preferences are also based on bodily conditions. These kinds of hypotheses rely on the assumption that the mind is embodied, in the sense that in what happens to the body, both the outward and inward conditions affect the experience. The emphasis of this kind of thinking is on “embodied meaning that emerges as structures of organism-environment interactions or transactions”. Mark Johnson, for example, aims at dissolving the ranking order and division between descriptive, conceptual, or propositional meaning versus emotive meaning. Not only emotion but also corporeality is deeply interlinked with emotive capacities that are the often-neglected factors at the core of the meaning-making process. This means reconsidering the human being as a “biological organism engaging its environment” and also taking into consideration the “organic activity” this engagement entails.

238 Johnson 2007, xii.
239 Johnson 2007, 10.
An embodied view of meaning looks for the origins and structures of meaning in the organic activities of embodied creatures in interaction with their changing environments. It sees meaning and all our higher faculties as growing out of and shaped by our abilities to perceive things, manipulate objects, move our bodies in space, and evaluate the situation we are in. Its principle of continuity is that the “higher” develops from the “lower”, without introducing from the outside any new metaphysical kinds.²⁴⁰

What specifically is the relation of this kind of embodied meaning to aesthetic experience? Is it a reciprocal relation where the aesthetic adds to the meaning or even generates it in a sense? The explicitly pragmatist view of meaning as relational underlines that a thing’s meaning lies mainly in its concrete and possible effects.²⁴¹ Some parts of the theory of embodied experience serve us here to understand the preconditions for aesthetic experience but other parts do not seem relevant in this sense.

Paul Crowther approached the embodiment theme with an emphasis on “the body’s sensori-motor capacities operating as a unified field”.²⁴² This notion of the unified field underlines the functioning together of the complex totality of sense perception and the skills inherent to that. This unified field is in action in engagement with others or with the surrounding environment. However, as Crowther reminds us, “the reciprocity between subject and object of experience is unstable. It has to be achieved – sometimes from the most adverse circumstances.”²⁴³ The continuous renewal of this reciprocity, the continuing process of interplay between the components of an experience, is what can be described as engagement.

Even embodiment theories are written from the human perspective but the slight shift in focus in order to see the human being as a living organism assists in understanding the environment in a clearer and more flexible way. Even an attempt to strip away some of the cultural templates imposed on the

²⁴⁰ Johnson 2007, 10.
²⁴¹ Ibid.
²⁴² Crowther 1993, 1.
²⁴³ Crowther 1993, 6.
conception of environment clarifies the relation to some extent. Both Johnson and Crowther base their views on embodiment on Merleau-Ponty’s account of human experience. The foundational role of perception for the human processes of understanding and knowledge formation is indisputable also from the perspective of the specifically embodied understanding of aesthetic experience.

Of interest in this study is not what aesthetic experiences are as such, rather the focus is on the previously uncharted factors leading to them and the manifold reactions they ignite. There is often a notable friction in situations and encounters that ignite our attention, that leave a lasting mark. So it is worth underlining that negative aspects in experiences are not only necessary, their presence demands an acknowledgment of their existence and the cultivation of our reactions to them. Human environments are far from perfect; they are a combination of planned development and the results of unplanned actions which are melted together by the multiple facets of human experience.

Without a doubt, there are occasions that are worse and those that are better for the aesthetic to come forth in experience. Discrepancies between aesthetic experiences either in similar situations or concerning the same constituents provide interesting evidence that leads one to consider the role of the changing factors that affect experiences. Of these I have been presenting spatial conditions as something that could affect the overall experience in a previously uncharted way. The intention is also to eschew some of the unnecessarily binding meanings that have been attached to aesthetic experiences with their unpredictable and vast array of manifestations. Disparity and divergence of experiences does not yet suffice as such as proof of solely leaving these matters to the subjective experience when discussing how the aesthetic in its many forms affects us. Revising the concept in order for it to better fit the actual evolving usages and the existing conditions it is attached to is thus one of the aims of this thesis.
Location of the Body and Directions in Space

The location of the body in relation to surrounding space is in constant change. This somewhat nomadic relation to space seems to reflect a certain more general aspect of the relation to space in general. What can we learn from these changing locations and positions? A certain amount of tolerance towards uncertainties and differences is presumed. Also resilience cultivated by changing conditions can offer more diversified experiences and less rigid attitudes towards preserving aesthetic habits that do not serve their purpose anymore, whether of spatial origin or merely represented in space.

Both Bollnow and Tuan seem to endorse the fact that certain geometrical parameters of experience exist and are discernible in experience. The upright posture of a human being can be seen as the “natural” basis for directions in space. Since Aristotle, “above” and “below”, “front” and “back”, “right” and “left”, have “naturally” derived from the upright position of the human being. For Aristotle himself, “each [pair] has its own non-interchangeable character.” According to Bollnow, above and below are distinct since they do not depend on the arbitrariness of a human being’s position.244 Even in a handstand, for example, up and down retain their original meanings. This is because this pair of concepts is defined by gravity and its clear pull in a specific direction. However, when underwater or in outer space the concepts of up and down become obscure because in these special conditions gravity as such is weak or absent.

Tuan bases the upright position of the human body as the starting point. In this way, the upright body of a human being sets the articulation of space “in accordance with his corporeal schema”.245 It seems instinctively obvious that the “contrast between standing and lying is known to animals, but only in the upright posture of humans – that is, in the transition from four-legged to two-legged walking – does it appear in its full clarity”.246 Anatomical directional terms rely on these distinctions, since body planes refer to the internal structure of the body. It

244 Bollnow 2011, 45.
245 Tuan 2008, 35–36. See also Kant 1991b; Woelert 2007.
246 Bollnow 2011, 160.
should be noted that these reference planes continue extended outside the body into surrounding space, for example in practices such as zoological anatomy.

As Bollnow points out, change of position of the body in the simple act of lying down in order to sleep, changes the relation to space:

When we lie down in order to sleep, this is not just a movement within space where space stands still and we move in it, but there is a basic change in the relationship between man and space, and at the same time [...] between man and the experienced space itself.247

Thus the whole strain of the upright posture comes from resisting gravity.248 It is because of this bodily position acquired by human beings following a process of evolution that one has to lie down from time to time in order to rest both physiologically and mentally. This period of rest changes one’s perceptual perspective and also partly because human beings have usually dedicated certain spaces to rest and repose inside their buildings. These spaces are usually designed to be more shielded, tranquil, and private, and are often found in the innermost spaces of buildings.

Bollnow alludes to the work of Erwin Strauss when he states that the upright position gives freedom from the world. Being upright opens up a larger perspective, further possibilities, and, as such, affects behaviour.249 As a result a certain continuing tension exists “between man and world” when man retains the upright position.250 This seems to be most of the time when he is awake. Being upright and standing is then related to being active, working, and being able to move with only a reasonably slight effort. This vertical axis is thus unaltered by action, and it primes also the horizontal as a result and as its opposite. Together they form “the simplest concrete system of concrete human space”251 in which the variety and scale of human action is already embedded.

The upright posture in itself manifests a distance from the material ground

247 Bollnow 2011, 161.
248 Ibid.
250 Bollnow 2011, 162.
251 Bollnow 2011, 46.
layer of the earth. From this might follow also the intuitively known effects of physical positions to mental phenomena. These are realised in practices such as soothing and the distanced lying down of the patient in psychoanalytic treatment, different meditation and relaxation methods practised while sitting or lying down, and so on. When in a comfortable position, such as lying down, one “reacts less actively to the stimuli of the environment”.252 As a consequence, one might argue that the concentrated form of receptiveness to phenomena in the environment is at its highest when reposing in a relatively relaxed state, for example in the comfort of the cinema or theatre. On the other hand, this relaxed state can also be considered less alert and receptive as such. Following these notions on the differences between upright and horizontal positions, one might be able to localise and point out also specific transition phases between different bodily postures and positions.253

Bollnow touches upon transferred meanings of different spatial directions. Above is associated with “being on top”, elevated experiences and religious meanings. Below is contrasted to this as its opposite.254 In the same manner, the future is something that is in front and past events are left behind. These transferred meanings and metaphorical usages of the concepts are apt in describing spatial experience to some extent.

Bollnow can be criticised for attaching the horizontal plane too strictly to the earth as the ground beneath and the air below. Human beings have broadened their range of experience with technology since Bollnow’s time. These extensions, however marginal situations air and space travel for example still are, have to be included in the discussion since they have a direct impact on the above-mentioned directions when moving above the surface of the earth.

“The opacity of the earth” becomes contrasted with “the transparency of the air” in the phenomenon of the horizon where the two merge in a perceptually fascinating way.255 The distance implied in the very notion of the horizon attaches

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252 Bollnow 2011, 163.
253 See also Merleau-Ponty 2002, 313.
254 Bollnow 2011, 45.
to it a certain unattainability. No matter how and by what means one approaches it, one can never reach the horizon. The horizon as a notion is however tied to the Earth; it is only when distancing oneself to the outer layers of the atmosphere as in space travel, for example, that one is freed from the traditional notion of the horizon. One can, however, find a version of the phenomenon of the horizon on the surface of the moon and so on.

Bollnow seems to emphasise too much the importance of the ground for man’s ability to move or for the basic security of human life. It is, of course, traditionally, historically, and evolutionarily the starting point for all human endeavours, but one should by no means think of it as a permanently determined grounding element for human activity or experience. Manmade tools, technological trends, and any yet unrealised creative capacities come into play here probing and imagining alternatives to the spatial experience defined by the “firm ground underfoot”\textsuperscript{256}. Different psychological phobias can describe in an exaggerated way the natural fears of losing the material surroundings as they are. Bollnow in his time understood these phobias as belonging to human nature and its way of being in a very elementary manner. Today, these kinds of “natural” fears are considered more of a disorder, an anomaly, something that should and could be overcome. They are not allowed to define the range of human life in any sense. Open-plan offices and staircases without railings are a norm and the anxieties and fears they might cause are considered abnormal.

In front is the direction where the “attention is focused” and so directly linked to the task at hand. Thus orientation in space is derived from activity and being occupied by it.\textsuperscript{257} To a large extent, directions in space acquire their meaning and content from movement or at least the idea of it. The structural symmetry of the human body leads to the “sideways direction” of left and right.\textsuperscript{258} However,

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\textsuperscript{256} E.g. as described in Salman Rushdie’s novel \textit{The Ground Beneath Her Feet}: “Earthquakes, scientists say, are common phenomena. Globally speaking there are around fifteen thousand tremors a decade. Stability is what’s rare. The abnormal, the extreme, the operatic, the unnatural: these rule. There is no such thing as normal life. Yet the everyday is what we need, it’s the house we build to defend us against the big bad wolf of change.” (Rushdie 1999, Chapter 16 “Vina Divina”)

\textsuperscript{257} Bollnow 2011, 50.

\textsuperscript{258} Bollnow 2011, 53.
the human body is not totally symmetrical: the placings of the internal organs, smaller or bigger differences between parts of the face or details of the body and, maybe most notably to the perceiver, being right or left-handed all attest to this.

Yoga and other practices that cultivate the connection between body and mind offer a slightly subtler yet more systematic way of testing the limits of the body within the space it takes. Shusterman, for example, has written extensively of his concept of somaesthetics with the Feldenkrais method specifically in mind. Advanced bodywork methods or bodily practices such as yoga or t’ai chi ch’uan259 or further developed somatic educational systems such as Pilates, the Alexander technique, or the Feldenkrais method260 take this natural asymmetry into consideration while on the other hand moulding and directing the body into a better alignment to support the optimal functioning of the anatomical structure.

Johnson discerns four qualitative dimensions of bodily movements: tension, linearity, amplitude, and projection.261 Of these, especially linearity has a straightforward relation to the apprehension of space, spatial relations, and directions. Spatial embodiment thus differs slightly from other dimensions of embodiment that are more tied to the “inner” sensorimotor functions of the body. Johnson underlines that these qualities of motion are not subjective, but essentially belong to the “organism-environment interaction”.262 Johnson uses empirical research from cognitive sciences to build on these hypotheses formed by phenomenological inquiry.

Altered States of Experiencing Space, Direction, and Movement

When thinking about the ways in which the body and its use are connected to the space where this use takes place, one must bear in mind how the human

259 Also ttàijíquán or shortened as taiji.
260 Joseph Pilates presented his theory of contrology as coordination of the mind and the body, Pilates & Robbins 2011. See also Alexander 2001; Feldenkrais 2009.
261 Johnson 2007, 21–23. For a sociological and phenomenological account on how gender has culturally defined the use of space and movements in it, see Young 1980. See also Sheets-Johnstone 2011, 140–151.
262 Johnson 2007, 25; italicised by Johnson.
anatomy is interconnected.\textsuperscript{263} The shattering of this system leads to the vanishing of some or all of the possibilities offered by the interconnected system of the body.\textsuperscript{264} On the other hand, perfecting some skills and emphasising others in different types of “non-everyday” actions and situations can help to assess the “normality” inherent in the movements that are associated with everyday actions.

Johnson reminds us how “through our movements we get ‘in touch’ with our world, taking its human measure”.\textsuperscript{265} This primordial nature of movements consists of moving in space in “constant contact with the contours of our environment”.\textsuperscript{266} Thus, also through different kinds of actions, the “human measure” affects how the world is perceived. Even if for a fleeting moment, the space that surrounds us is formed in a different way by the very movements of the body.

Here are presented some examples of activities that lead to somewhat altered spatial experiences, at least when compared with the so-called everyday spatial experience, as it can be generally understood. These states challenge our habitual ways of experiencing surrounding conditions and the relation of our body to them through the changing form, location, or immediate conditions of the body. Since they have been considered exceptions from the normative experience, they have not been altogether relevant for philosophical thought, dance being the only exception.

Examples such as diving and dancing can be studied from the psychological perspective of learning skills, but also the everyday consists of altered states that are the effect of internal causes, such as waking up from a deep sleep. One interesting group of examples comes from the sphere of extreme sports. Their fascination comes directly from the new, unexplored states of bodily presence that cannot often be acquired without an element of danger. By bringing these examples to the discussion, I aim at showing briefly that these states can shed some light on the “regular” spatial experience.

\textsuperscript{263} Cf. Straus 1966.
\textsuperscript{264} Rusczek 2014, 99.
\textsuperscript{265} Johnson 2007, 19.
\textsuperscript{266} Johnson 2007, 20.
Dance

Dance offers an example of a specific practice that challenges the relationship with experienced space. The experience of dancing opens up a new space with its own special character.\textsuperscript{267} Arnold Berleant writes on how dancing expresses different ranges of the use of the body:

The body functions as an organism at its fullest and freest in dance, yet it is a functioning that explores not just the body’s physical capacities through twisting, turning, stretching, and leaping but also its biosocial range through lifting, carrying, embracing, and moving in tandem in a shimmering iridescence of interrelationships.\textsuperscript{268}

It is precisely this “iridescence of interrelationships” that ties dancing to the specific environment where it takes place. The entanglements of relations formed by the act of dancing, together with the physical movement within and through space, make it truly both an expression and an exploration of the spatial possibilities of the body.

Dance studies have shown on numerous different ways how movement motivated by this intentional and often especially artistic aspiration takes place in its surrounding space. For example, Laban Movement Analysis (LMA)\textsuperscript{269} charts the body’s movement in space. Despite its origins it is not used only in dance theory. Its graphic notation system is called Labanotation. Results of these studies have been used for example in robotics in order to mimic human movement, which is surprisingly challenging to replicate with the inorganic mechanical structures of the current generation of robots. It is obvious that only the outer functioning of the movements is replicable at this state, not the actual experience or even behaviour that follows from it.

Dance as a practice underlines the fact that “our self-movement creates our sense of spaces with their differing designs and patterns”.\textsuperscript{270} By engaging in

\textsuperscript{267} Bollnow 2011, 236.
\textsuperscript{268} Berleant 1997, 90.
\textsuperscript{269} See e.g. Laban & Ullmann 1960. There are also other movement analysis systems such as the Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP), and Movement Pattern Analysis (MPA). See e.g. Kestenberg Amighi, Loman, Lewis & Sossin 1999.
\textsuperscript{270} Johnson 2007, 25.
dancing, one takes possession of the movement of one’s body and also of the surrounding space through movement. It can thus be understood as animation, as a paradigmatic process of bodily sense-making.\textsuperscript{271} Accentuating the relation to space, testing and expanding its limits also belong to the realm of dancing as a practice. Both professional and amateur dancing are connected to the pleasure of moving one’s body and also realising its possibilities within the given framework of skills, surroundings, and imagination.

In experiencing, understanding, and especially enjoying dancing, \textit{kinesthetic awareness} is of importance. It refers to the ability to empathise or feel how another person feels his or her body in movement from the inside. This special kind of awareness is evidently based on an innate “act space or primitive body scheme” that presents itself already in infants.\textsuperscript{272} The relativity of kinesthetic awareness means that it is always a result of a process of learned interpretation of the body’s spatial position. Thus it can also be imagined, remembered, or misinterpreted.

\textbf{Waking Up}

Regaining consciousness when waking up after a deep sleep can even be a disturbing experience. It consists of a process of reorienting both in space and time, of reigniting the somatic system, as well as a phased recollection of memory and cognitive capacities. This slowly clearing “haze” of waking up is famously described by Marcel Proust in his \textit{In Search of Lost Time} (\textit{À la recherche du temps perdu}, 1913–1927), where the protagonist’s process of waking up from sleep is described in painstaking detail.\textsuperscript{273} After deep sleep, relation with the surroundings has to be rebuilt, sometimes even seemingly from scratch since the total dislocation of the sleeping mind causes exceeding difficulty in perceiving the surrounding space and what is included in it.

Some aspects of this process of awakening can be compared to reorienting oneself in the dark, as described earlier. Darkness as such does not, however, cut spatial ties as drastically as the state of deep sleep. In a similar way, after this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{271} Sheets-Johnstone 2011, 148.
\item \textsuperscript{272} Johnson 2007, 38; Meltzoff & Moore 1995, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{273} Proust 1999, 15–17; see also Lane 2011.
\end{itemize}
non-centred state, regaining one’s position in the environment requires some time. When falling asleep, it feels as if, on the part of the sleeper, “the world itself falls asleep and takes the sleeper captive. He himself dissolves and becomes a part of the sleeping world”. Yet especially unexpected and sudden impulses from the environment can easily disturb sleep to the point of intruding into dreams or even waking up the sleeper.

It can feel as if space “itself becomes a protective covering that draws itself together around us”. In some ways, sleep breaks the conscious relationship with space. In this way one can understand why Bollnow describes sleep “as a condition of perfect non-spatiality”. In sleep, the body is located but the lack of interaction with the environment on the part of the sleeper renders him or her almost non-spatial for the time being. There are, of course, some slight exceptions to this mainly in the form of different kinds of sleep anomalies, such as sleep paralysis and sleepwalking.

**Underwater Diving**

Being underwater drastically alters perception and the effect that spatiality has on the senses. The pressure of water on the body alters almost in every way the functioning of the senses. One can no longer trust information acquired from the surrounding space: distances seem difficult or impossible to interpret. Even one’s own hand at the length of the arm seems disjointed from the rest of the body when looked at through a mass of water. Not only is the optical information distorted by the element of water and darkness, which is penetrated most often only by artificial light, but also other senses become strongly affected.

Immediately beneath the surface, the sense of smell stops functioning altogether because the breathing it requires is compromised. The pressure of the water affects hearing, and one can mainly hear the humming sound produced by one’s own ears because of the pressure. The haptic dimension of experience becomes central, yet in a distorted way. Only when one becomes accustomed

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274 Bollnow 2011, 174.
275 Bollnow 2011, 175.
276 Bollnow 2011, 176.
to the way in which staying underwater alters the surrounding physical context can one start to trust and interpret the senses again. This foreign element of water seems to work as an illuminating example of the habitual nature of the capabilities of sensory interpretation.

Especially in those forms of diving in which one uses a breathing apparatus such as scuba diving, one is faced with the paradoxical experience of breathing underwater. Compared to freediving, one is able to stay underwater for a longer time and to reach thus deeper under the surface. The body has a surprisingly strong urge to resist breathing underwater; it is most probably partly evolutionary and partially learned. However, one can unlearn this fairly quickly, and thus eventually master a new skill of breathing compressed air through the equipment in the kind of conditions which would otherwise make breathing impossible. This cannot but affect the experience as a whole.

Underwater diving thus offers a poignant case of sporting embodiment.\textsuperscript{277} The aesthetic possibilities of underwater diving are also notable, but mainly acknowledged in the context of the natural sciences, and have not been theorised in any real aesthetically relevant sense yet. Combining these two separate perspectives, the spatial changes that affect the embodied subject and the aesthetic aspects of being underwater, could provide us with a more advanced level of understanding of the more general human lived experience and its relation to aesthetic possibilities in different kinds of environments into which human activity has already been extended.

\textbf{Other Examples}

In the context of spatial experience, one can consider even exceptional and fairly rarely practised activities such as bungee jumping or other relatively new physical practices, which belong under that label of extreme sports. They challenge the common experience of gravity and “normal” positioning of the body within its spatial sphere. The effect of free falling in a controlled situation and environment detaches the body from the aspect of danger even though the

\textsuperscript{277} See Allen-Collinson & Hockney 2011.
physical reactions such as the rush of adrenalin normally associated with being in immediate danger are still present. The rebound effect hitting after the free fall phase serves as a reminder and means quick repositioning of the body in relation to the gravitational forces. After the escape of a few seconds the jumper is reeled back by the sudden upward pull of the gigantic elasticised cord.

The lived experience associated with bungee jumping reveals the binding nature of the relation with the ground of the earth itself. Challenging this relation in an extremely dynamic way can alter even one’s everyday experience since it makes one aware of a different, even though totally artificially created, experience. As an activity that is very detached from everyday life, this has the purpose of shaking the habitual notions of spatial experience in relation to movements and the gravitational pull of the earth.

As in the case of underwater diving, meteorological conditions alter an experience that requires first positioning oneself at a high altitude in order to perform the activity. Also any other activity that takes place outdoors is bound to be affected by meteorological conditions that are only to some extent predictable and manageable. Even though these conditions do not necessarily affect the actual space, they affect how it is perceived or they change slightly the surface of the materials in a way that changes how one can move. For example, a sudden rain deepens colours as the surface materials get wet. Rain and snow also make surfaces slippery and less graspable by the human hand, both in natural and urban environments.

Bungee jumping is a relatively recent recreational practice and its physical effects and experiential consequences have possibly been considered too random and marginal to study or even speculate about. However, as a speculative yet realisable example it offers an example of a contemporary physical practice in which the body transcends the conventional limits of its relation to the surrounding space. The experience of “stepping over the ledge” into the void might not be translatable as such to other, more mundane experiences, but picturing it helps to delineate the limits and the inevitable transgressions related to them.
Spatiality in Different Kinds of Human Environments

Urban environments comprised of buildings and that miscellaneous array of indefinable spaces that go together with the more pronounced built entities, are presented here as paradigmatic examples of spatial and aesthetic experiences and of how they are related to each other. Human habitation and human experience of space are interrelated literally from the “beginning” of time and define in their complex interrelated ways what kinds of choices are continuously being made in different phases of planning, building, inhabiting and further improving as well as tearing down these environments.

Since urban, built, and human environments are at the centre of this study, natural environments as such are not featured to any significant extent. This is in part simply because they do not even represent everyday environments for most people in today’s world. The human element in natural environments, if they are to be even considered “natural”, is also less clear, so it can be claimed that the experience of them contains more elements of adjusting and adapting to what is given than actively changing and moulding it. At least if they are to be considered natural anymore. The same is obviously true in urban environments, but at least the opportunity to change and affect the existing human components of the conditions exists.278

The human relation to natural environments is an important one, but something that can be in this sense observed mostly through recreational experiences and so forth. Even tribes living in the most natural conditions – in the Amazonian rainforest, for example – are not living properly speaking in natural environments, although their environment can be described to be “more natural” than that of a regular contemporary city dweller. I do not wish to perpetuate unnecessarily the juxtaposition between “natural” and “urban” or “built” environment, but simply admit that those environment at the more natural end of the spectrum are not as relevant for this study on spatial experience. This is partly also because the relation to other people is considered an important factor in spatial experience

278 For more on this distinction, see Berleant & Carlson 2007.
and, on the other hand, the focus is, as said already, those environments that contribute to everyday experience.

When it comes to defining closer everyday environments, among the aesthetic study of architecture there are a few lines of thought that are worth mentioning. Roger Scruton redirects the question of the nature of architecture to how it is enjoyed and what kind of experience is derived from it.\(^{279}\) He does not, however, find totally satisfying architectural experience considered only as spatial relations or “the play of interlocking voids”.\(^{280}\) In my view Scruton’s views are burdened by the fact that he still deals with architecture and buildings as objects of appreciation. Yet, interestingly enough, he does associate architecture with “an aesthetics of everyday life”.\(^{281}\)

Karsten Harries, in his turn, offers an alternative approach to the aesthetics of built spaces by attributing an ethical function to architecture. In this sense, he deploys the notion of “the decorated shed” in which aesthetic elements are a kind of surplus added only in an attempt to increase the aesthetic appeal of the built structure.\(^{282}\) This, of course, represents a highly one-dimensional understanding of the aesthetic as such. Both of these views presented by Scruton and Harries emphasise the friction between understanding architecture as space or enclosure of space and understanding it through its multiple functions.\(^{283}\) I do not, however, find totally sufficient the way these approaches take spatial experience into consideration. In order to do this, the emphasis has to be moved from architecture to a somewhat more general understanding of the environment consisting of different spheres and types of spatialities.

The opposition between inside and outside is fundamental to built spaces, which by their very concept fence in and cut off a part that was previously

\(^{279}\) Scruton 1979, 3.
\(^{280}\) Scruton 1979, 43.
\(^{281}\) Scruton 1979, 17.
\(^{282}\) Here Harries refers directly to Robert Venturi’s, Denise Scott Brown’s, and Steven Izenour’s pioneering work *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972) and, by doing this, opposes the equally famous definition Nikolaus Pevsner presents in his *An Outline of European Architecture* (1943) and by which he distinguishes a piece of architecture from a mere building. Harries 1997, 4–6, 28. See also Venturi, Brown and Izenour 1977; Pevsner 1948.
\(^{283}\) Scruton 1979, 43.
This distinction between the inside and the outside follows from an abrupt break in the spatial continuum of the environment. Usually, the inside space is experientially more concentrated, and this seems to be tied to it being intentional and functional on a high level. The sacred function according to Mircea Eliade, for example, makes space experientially denser, whereas space without strong significance is “without structure or consistency, amorphous”. It is debatable, whether this amorphous space is indeed without strong significance, or whether it is more fluent in accommodating different kinds of significances in a flexible way. These significances are attached to actions and practices, not just contemplation or interpretation of given significances. This is also the reason why the role and relevance of the significances attached by a large variety of different dimensions is difficult to point out.

The social dimension of human environments often seems a difficult one to tackle from the aesthetic point of view. However, it is, even if systematically overlooked, a vital sphere of human life that also contributes to aesthetic potentialities inherent in different kinds of environments. Community development has in recent years emphasised the communal aspects of living. Elemental in today’s world is the fact that a great degree of choice must exist in engaging with any communal activity in order to socialise human beings in a sustainable way. Being in contact with others is considered to increase individual’s well-being and diminish social problems as a consequence. Participating in community’s activities and so on is seen as a healthy activity affecting beneficially the whole community. In stark contrast to this, efforts towards gaining privacy at any cost often culminate in negative behaviour. Individuals’ desire for a certain amount of privacy needs to be acknowledged in order for it to be directed into a more constructive manifestation. This is especially crucial as population densities are increasing and the worldwide urbanisation process is well on its way.

An example of taking into account this very sensitive subject concerning

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284 See also Giedion 1964.
285 Eliade 1961, 20. For more on this dichotomy that for Eliade is ontological, see Trizio 2009.
286 E.g. NIMBY as an acronym for “not in my back yard” thinking.
the basic need for privacy and a space of one’s own are the shelters created for locals by Japanese design students after the Fukushima catastrophe. These foldable shelters created as quick disaster relief acknowledge the individual’s need for privacy after the very bare necessities of nourishment are provided.\textsuperscript{287} This acknowledgment allows for individuals to collect themselves cognitively, emotionally, and psychologically in a way that makes possible the reinstallation of aesthetic capacities as well. By this I refer to the aesthetic as pertaining to decidedly meaningful and profound experiences, not just garnishing the lived-world or referring to aestheticised experiences. The aesthetic understood in this sense is vital for human beings and as such needs to acquire a more stable status in assessing human environments. Quite apart from being fixed, the ability to have and place value on sustainable aesthetic experiences changes along with a fluctuation of changing conditions.

Enlarging the scope of study from buildings to environments in a fluid continuation does justice to human experience since spatial experience does not function only in accordance with the limits that are posed to it by built form. The reciprocal relation between inside and outside spaces does not hinder or radically alter experiences but instead offers possibilities for enhancing or suppressing each other. In its simplest form, this can be seen in how perceptions of entering a building are changed depending on whether there is a lush garden, a wide and empty square, or a derelict and unmaintained streetscape in front of the building. This example does not cover, however, all of the nuances existing in a city, in which actions and history have built quite organically around the more planned constructs.

The notion of the \textit{hub} could be used here to mark urban spaces where action and, as a consequence, experienced spatiality intensifies. Hubs define spaces that are more densely used, even though these uses also depend on the time of day and the rhythms embedded in the environment. Thus, the hub also serves as a metaphor for transient places, environments that have an effect without actually being constituted as objects of aesthetic attention. These, or some of

\textsuperscript{287} For the hierarchy of needs, see Maslow 1943.
these at least, are in turn what Augé describes as non-places. Non-places include such spaces as airports, waiting rooms, and corridors which are considered to be mainly practical inside spaces. This line of thought is strengthened by the idea that the “sense of estrangement and detachment is often evoked by the technologically most advanced settings, such as hospitals and airports.” In the urban environment though, such outdoor spaces as parking lots and pocket parks can also be considered such non-places — or non-spaces.

Hubs can be defined as focal points or central parts of action or stopping points between two distinct places. Thus, hubs also act as nodes that link different kinds of environments together. Within network theory space syntax is understood as the analysis of spatial configurations. The concept of a viewshed is used for example in the practices of urban planning or computational archaeology. Within different kinds of environments these concepts can be understood as assisting in forming an understanding of the complex totality of spatio-experiential networks. The connectedness of environments varies from non-connected, even hindered connections to a flow within a continuum of almost completely merged environments. These different extremes are especially clearly detected in built environments. Motorways, for example, in some cases totally cut movement, links and thus any further contact between adjacent buildings. This seems controversial, since on a large scale, motorways are traditionally justified based to some extent on the notion of connectedness and fluid mobility.

Most environments open up properly only when in movement, whether it is created by a leisurely stroll or changing location by motorised vehicle. In this sense, permeability in urban design and spatial planning is generally considered a positive value. Permeability or connectivity describes the extent to which urban forms and structures permit or restrict movement of people or vehicles in different directions. This includes how a landscape or cityscape opens up in front of a city dweller. A permeable city is spatially and experientially more interesting, as well as generally more pedestrian-friendly. Walkability as such

288 Pallasmaa 2005b, 19.
290 A central concept in e.g. New Urbanism.
has many benefits, and it alone can be noted to increase aesthetic possibilities, especially in dense urban areas.

“Institutionalised” Aesthetic Experiences

For the purpose of emphasising their spatial determinacy, archetypal art-bound aesthetic experiences are here named *institutionalised aesthetic experiences.*

These types of experiences are catered within the domains of art museums and galleries, theatres, opera houses, and so on. Also the entertainment industry offers philosophically less discussed yet already established aesthetic experiences linked to places such as movie theatres and amusement parks. Experiences linked to these types of places are sometimes claimed to be mainly recreational in nature but in my view, an aesthetic component is most certainly present in the experience even though at varying degrees.

The range of somato-cognitive experiential potential varies on a sliding scale that has been described for example by the distinction between “high-brow” and “low-brow” culture. Without going further into this discussion, I wish to briefly refer to experiences that are more traditionally associated with certain built environments. The practice of dedicating buildings to specific uses is so widely accepted and takes place to such an extent that a proportionally large amount of the space in city centres is allotted to buildings dedicated to one or a few clearly defined art forms.

On an individual experiential level, art experiences of the most traditional kind offer a certain formula within which each factor has a preordained position. For a member of the audience, the tedium of anticipatory elements or spatial challenges involved in the actual situation of confronting a work of art can lead to a specific kind of frustration. Such a negative effect can follow, for example,
from the overly intrusive presence of other visitors in the gallery space.\textsuperscript{293} Outwardly dictated and predetermined conditions for aesthetic experiences can at worst lead to situations where the core conditions of the experience are actually lacking but the further framework is meticulously yet misleadingly produced. In this kind of context some frustration and confusion mixed with suspicion of inadequacy seems to be the only experience offered. These can be described as empty or even failed experiences where the promise of the aesthetic is not fulfilled in any reasonably satisfactory way.

The participatory element in museum environments is an important aspect when considering a more comprehensive approach to museum spaces as arenas for aesthetic experiences.\textsuperscript{294} The institutionalised view to the production of aesthetic experiences also includes some critique towards the so-called art world in determining the material and conceptual limits to the production of artworks. This is, however, not at the forefront of this analysis, which aims at understanding aesthetic experiences and how they are preliminarily influenced by commonly agreed norms and ramifications as they become manifested in space.

How should these kinds of “all-inclusive” aesthetic experiences catered by art museums be reconsidered from the point of view of spatial experiences? The level of productisation of aesthetic experiences in museum environments has become more evident when the focus has shifted towards appreciating the experiences embedded in everyday life and especially when taking place in less conventional environments. Preserving the traditional purity of the art domain has in recent decades been challenged more and more by the fracturing into sub-fields of contemporary art represented by such trends as environmental art, bio art, digital art, and socially experimental forms of art, just to name a few directions. This paradigm shift has been gradual but its effects on overall aesthetic sensitivity have already been noticeable.

Bringing art into everyday environments and, on the other hand, bringing more mundane activities inside traditional art institutions is a way to open the

\textsuperscript{293} See Pelowski, Liu, Palacios & Akiba 2014.
\textsuperscript{294} Berleant on museum environments as participatory environments, see Berleant 1992. See also Mäki-Petäjä 2014.
closed sphere and make it more approachable. This kind of cross-pollination of the art sphere with other elements seems to grow in importance in order to preserve, cultivate and develop the core values of art itself. This is to be kept in mind, especially insofar as art is often considered to have some type of societal impact in focus.

**Spatial Elements of the Sublime**

The relation of the sublime to human fears has its origin in the actual dangers of the physical world. The sublime is understood here mainly through the line of thinking originating from the 18th century, not as the sublime became represented in Greek tragedy or as the mathematical sublime, just to name a few other possible directions. One is bound to ask how the sublime relates to other aesthetic categories. In the context of spatiality, it is also important to ask how spatial experience manifests itself in these categories that differ from the traditional aesthetic experience. Often, according to the most common examples of the sublime experience is can be hastily extrapolated to concern mainly the magnificence of nature interpreted in a somewhat romanticised light. Other more recent interpretations of the sublime have, however, enlarged the scope and accentuated the different nuances of this particular type of experience. Most notably the notion of the everyday sublime is of assistance in understanding how spatial experiences are to be thought of in this context.

Etymologically the word *sublime* derives from the Latin word *sublimis*, referring to crossing a line or border. Experience of the sublime is characterised by a sense of elevation, a pleasure combined with an aspect of terror in the face of something awe-inspiring, impressive and at the same time frightful. The participation of these fears, anxieties, and phobias in relation to space are strongly presented in Edmund Burke’s notion of the sublime.295 According to Burke, the sublime has the force to destroy us; this is in part purely because of

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295 See Burke 2001.
the material qualities that go with it, such as immensity and vastness in scale. The realisation that follows from perceiving these overpowering aspects ignites the awe and fear that, however, turns into pleasure through the realisation that one is safe despite these immensities.

The main aspect of the Burkean sublime, compared to that presented by Kant, for example, is that Burke approaches sublimity with descriptions of its physiological and psychological effects. Kant further elaborates some of Burke’s ideas, for example by discerning as much as three different types of sublime. The development of the sublime coincides interestingly with the formation of aesthetics as a discipline; it is further proof of its indispensability for understanding the full range of aesthetic experiences.

Bollnow comes close to the Burkean definition of the sublime by describing the fear attached to it as an emotion in general. In this sense, he quotes Kierkegaard on “the dizziness of freedom”. According to Bollnow, all fear derives from the specific fear of falling or losing oneself in space. This fear, vertigo, is thus an existentially central factor to human beings and psychologically related to crisis and anxiety. Bollnow cites Binswanger, in a way that resembles a caution against hubris, of going too far beyond the limits, whether it means physically rising above the ground or departing in any other way from what constitutes the “reliable foundation for experience”. Transgressions effectuate the fear as an integral part of the sublime experience, but pleasure is made possible because the path back to the safe and reliable ground of experience still exists.

Natural phenomena such as thunderstorms or a raging sea are often used as examples when describing the sublime. Another classic example of the experience of the sublime is the view from the top of the mountain. The emblematic depiction of this experience is represented in Caspar David Friedrich’s famous Wanderer above the Sea of Fog (Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer, 1818). In the scene depicted by the painting, face to face with the immensity of nature, it is possible for a human being to “most directly experience the sense of expanse” or

296 See Kant 1991a.
297 Bollnow 2011, 48.
298 Bollnow 2011, 49.
“the opening up of infinite space”. The inner sensation described as elevation caused by this acknowledgment of expansion is what makes the experience of the sublime relevant in the spatial sense.

A version of the sublime experience is detectable in the definitions by which Bollnow characterises the world outside the protective and familiar space of home. The notions of breadth, strangeness, and distance together form an ensemble that covers some of the main spatial aspects of the sublime when it depends on spatial factors. Through breadth the opposite of narrowness is described:

As clothing may or may not allow the body freedom of movement, so breadth in the space around us denotes the absence of restriction, room to move. Man will step out into wide-open spaces if he is not held back. The endless dimension of ocean or plain opens up before him when he steps out of the narrow valley. Wide spaces uplift man and gladden him, but their sublimity may also overpower him.

This dual effect of breadth as wideness of open space evokes the sublime experience as well as a fair amount of pure enjoyment over spatial vastness.

Strangeness is contrasted instead by that which belongs to someone, what is one’s own:

Strangeness is the area where man no longer knows his way around and where he therefore feels helpless. He can of course go into strange places to learn new things or on business, but he is outside the trusted area, in a hostile world, and the feeling of strangeness can overpower him. We all recognize the feeling of inexpressible homesickness.

Strangeness is thus the proper opposite of the familiar, but as nothing can be thoroughly known, even the familiar always contains an element of the strange.

Distance defined by Bollnow is most clearly connected to the traditional notions of the sublime:

[It] speaks to man from the blue mountains on the horizon. It is not threatening and hostile as strangeness, but enticing.

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299 Bollnow 2011, 81.
300 Bollnow 1961, 4–5.
301 Ibid.
and alluring, endowed with indescribable charm. When man wearies of the ordinary existence, when the sameness of every day threatens to constrict his life, then distance beckons him. The longing for distant places is the basic urge of all romanticism which by a strange twist makes the road to far places the way back to a forgotten origin.\footnote{Bollnow 1961, 4–5.}

The notion of the sublime thus seems to be always linked to the idea of a limit. When gazing upon the horizon one realises the vastness of space but also the perceived limit to it that is set by perceptive capacities. One cannot see over or beyond the horizon. It moves with the perceiver, but it is still real in the sense that it is perceived: it is definitely not imagined. This is probably why images of the earth taken from outer space are so impressive.\footnote{E.g. in such legendary photographs as The Blue Marble (1972) or Pale Blue Dot (1990).} In a sense, the vastness of the cosmos provides us with the ultimate imaginable sublime experience.\footnote{See also Kessler 2012.} In the same sense, outer space implies an approximation of the ultimate imaginable distance. These developments of the sublime show that as an experience, it is at the same time a combination of reactions on a primitive and a highly cultured level.

There seems to exist a causal relation between the sublime and the loss or decrease of one’s own personal space, but this is difficult to pin down. Is it precisely the momentary loss of one’s spatial integrity that causes the experience of the sublime? Realising extreme distances can be an overwhelming experience, yet an altogether aesthetic one in this sense. The sublime is fundamentally understood still to be a positive experience. Despite the overwhelming and frightening qualities, the realisation of one’s position, of having some sort of role in the situation relocates the person in the midst of the pleasurable torments of the sublime experience.

The concept of the sublime opens up a chance to reconsider other parallel experiences that occur in more mundane environments and situations. Thomas Leddy writing about the connection between the everyday and the sublime reminds us that city experiences based on stark contrasts in the cityscape are
often described as sublime.\textsuperscript{305} This follows the consistent assumption that the sublime in an environment always contains an element of the “terrible”. Leddy reminds us that Proustian remembrance also contains a version of the sublime in its elevation of a quotidian moment. In Proust’s case, it is however questionable whether this moment is about the sublime in the everyday at all or just has an element of the everyday as its initial impetus.\textsuperscript{306}

Most importantly, however, Leddy re-interprets and re-evaluates Edward Bullough’s notion of the sublime in a way that is helpful for the purposes of this study.\textsuperscript{307} It seems that Bullough instills a certain worrisome restlessness and a sense of the uncanny into the heart of the experience in cases in which it can be described as sublime. In the context of the everyday this can mean both the presence and acknowledgement of an unfamiliar element even in some of the most familiar settings. The “distance” to which Bullough refers, describes this recognition of uncomfortable elements in a way that still allows the aesthetic pleasure to be felt and even to gain strength precisely from this recognition. Thus “the everyday sublime”, which might seem an oxymoron at first, can be linked by this tentative reference to the notion of the familiar in everyday spaces and how they are experienced.

The sublime is traditionally thought of as something that underlines the separateness of the subject from the object of the perception. However, even the overwhelming sensation inflicted by magnificent landscapes of traditional sublime experiences might stem instead from the realisation that, all in all, one is never fundamentally separate from one’s surroundings. This comes from a perception of the extreme vastness of space. Instead of the solid core of the self, one realises the connectedness, the sense of belonging, and the deep level of engagement with the environment that is manifested in one’s dependency on it.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{305} Leddy 2011, 27; Leddy also mentions as an example the “negative sublime” by which Berleant describes Disney World. In my opinion this does not, however, belong to the sphere of the everyday, since a theme park is not exemplary of an everyday environment despite the omnipresence of commercialisation within the sphere of the everyday; Leddy 2011, 28–29. Berleant 1997, 77–78.\\textsuperscript{306} Leddy 2011, 32–33.\\textsuperscript{307} See Bullough 1912.}
Encounters and Interaction as Spatio-Aesthetic Phenomena

Spatial experience is one factor which also affects the inferences of and actions towards other people. Potentially aesthetic situations most often include the presence of other people and thus contain many possibilities in which this can affect the overall experience. For example, the unbearable closeness or, in other cases, the total lack of other people can be a disturbing factor in potentially aesthetic situations. This can be true of aesthetic experiences defined as institutionalised by their settings, but the same is true for implicitly aesthetic situations of the everyday.

There are some primordial, non-conceptual modes of making contact and sharing common interest. Mutual gaze and joint attention “are rudimentary forms of interconnectedness with others by which we share some aspect of our joint world, even without speech or reflective thought”.308 For example, the moment when the same object catches the gaze of another human being besides myself, the fixed attention and shared interest in the immediate proximity binds us together, even if only between the silent, very personal experiences of both of us. Most often, this takes place only for a brief moment in the same sense as two speeding cars find exactly the same velocity for a moment before one speeds up and passes by.

This type of vague and intangible, yet shared experience correlates somewhat with the Levinasian notion of the relation-forming moment of a face-to-face encounter that reveals the simultaneous proximity and distance of the other. Subjectivity is thus understood as primordially ethical and materiality as something that grounds the ethic.309 Tom Sparrow reinterpreting Emmanuel Levinas refers to our “carnal sensibility, which meets with the face of the other in all its unfathomable complexity and its sensuous complexion”.310 This carnal sensibility is based on bodily awareness and the empathy towards the bodily existence of the other facilitated by this awareness and sharing of the same space.

308 Johnson 2007, 37.
309 See Sparrow 2013.
310 Sparrow 2013, loc. 1694.
Merleau-Ponty’s notion of intercorporeality (*intercorporéité*) is of interest here when considering the encounter with the other. By it, Merleau-Ponty refers to the meeting and touching of the bodies, acknowledging the other’s presence and its effect on oneself. An example of this is the simple and physical act of a handshake, which through its movement thrusts oneself into the personal space of the other and takes place within the coexistence of another person’s body.311

In a sense, the relations that take place within space also end up condensing it. The tissue of interwoven experiences is revealed only on closer inspection. Openness, curiosity towards the experience and sincerity, giving oneself to the experience always means letting go, of taking a leap of a sort in order to engage with the other. This necessary vulnerability is contrasted with detachment and irony as a choice of escape from any situation of interaction. Contrasted to this, the vulnerable state of openness marks in some ways a return to the simplified notions of contacting and reaching out to another person.

In these interpersonal interactions, the authenticity and genuineness of the experience determine the success of the aesthetic degree of the experience. According to this stance the quality of aesthetic experience thus has a strong ethical undertone. It depends as much on the qualities of the experiencer as on those of the “object” or the person on the other end of the shared experience. Against the backdrop of these fluctuations between distance and proximity in shared, interaction-based experiences we need to consider how to better understand the relational aspects of aesthetic encounters.

Within the context of sociology, Zygmunt Bauman has elaborated on *the stranger* in the context of city space and how the *aesthetic space*, more precisely, helps to confront the problem of the stranger in society. These notions from a slightly different point of view help in distinguishing the steps from the individual’s aesthetic experience towards a wider notion of aesthetic potentiality in environments on a societal level. The *flâneur* is a recurrent figure in urban aesthetics, starting with Charles Baudelaire and brought to central focus by Walter Benjamin. Bauman takes this notion and juxtaposes it with the figure

311 Hacklin 2012, 146–147.
of a stranger in the urban setting.

According to Bauman, the “stranger” as a whole is a product of modernity. It is “a figure proximate in physical space, yet socially distant”.[312] This invasion by the figure of a stranger in the society has effectively forced a construction of a sort of knowledge exchange-based, yet partly internalized system. The purpose of this controlling system is the mapping and organised construction of a cognitive space for the purposes of normalising and controlling the unnegotiable and unreliable element brought up by the appearance of this strange element.[313] This kind of social control as a collective coping mechanism cannot but affect each individual, since everyone is most of the time a stranger to others in the context of modern, urban life. This sensation of being treated as a stranger in the most negative sense has become especially emphasised following the very recent surge in terrorist attacks which keeps sowing irrational levels of fear towards any unknown element even in the most familiar city streets.

Bauman already emphasises that “pure space” as such is an abstraction. As a sociologist, he maintains that “aesthetic space is plotted affectively, by attention guided by curiosity and the search for experimental intensity, while moral space is ‘constructed’ through an uneven distribution of felt/assumed responsibility”. [314] Bauman’s space is thus not an experiential space, but is still helpful in confronting the issue of how society for its part affects more personal experiences. The societal notion of this controlled, collective space sets some guidelines for more concrete developments, such as planning and constructing public spaces. It also affects directly to a large extent the relation these practices have with any possible interpretations of more personal and private spaces. This again moulds the actual environment which aestheticians are so accustomed to analyse from another perspective.

Proteophobia, the fear of the stranger, does not pose a problem to the Benjaminian flâneur, since even in the crowd, he manages “to keep his distance socially by transforming physical proximity into aesthetic proximity – by opening up

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312 Bauman 1993, 146.
313 Ibid.
314 Ibid.
another dimension, hidden to others”. This is done by his imagination, by interweaving the surrounding reality to a narrative that serves his own personal satisfaction. Even the strange and uncanny thus receives an imaginative explanation, as a part of the flâneur’s internal narrative, which has a distanced relation to his or her actual environment. This is why the flâneur is not really affected by other people, he or she has his or her own mission: that of distanced and even aestheticised pleasure. Bauman considers that proteophobia functions as a driving force behind this cognitive extension of space, of imaginative space. Whereas its opposite, proteophilia, the love of the stranger, “prompts the efforts of aesthetic spacing”. Following this interpretation, the arrogant, fear-driven stance represented by the very existence of the flâneur seems to insinuate that the everyday experience is somewhat unaesthetic – or even anaesthetic – in its habitual, monotonic, and automatic response to different social and spatial cues.

Bauman refers here to aesthetic space as something that has been taken into use by the ever more conspicuous and problematic phenomenon of consumerism:

Aesthetic space is also inhospitable to moral sensibilities. Moral responsibility demands the kind of serious attention that conflicts with the free play of attention on which aesthetic spacing thrives. Yet, there is always hope for morality. Being with others opens up a possibility for the ethically prior mode of being for others. The construction of a space of moral responsibility is never guaranteed. “But it does happen, daily, and repeatedly – each time that people care, love, and bring succour to those who need it.”

It seems hypocritical to claim, though, that aesthetic preferences, whether consumerist or not, do not influence to some extent how this care and love is distributed and shown. The aesthetic cannot thus be neatly and altogether easily separated from some more “ethically prior mode of being”.

Bauman states eventually that these ties are no longer valid, since in the

315 Bauman 1993, 168.
316 Ibid.
317 Bauman 1993, 185.
globalised\textsuperscript{318} era proximity “no longer requires physical closeness; but physical closeness no longer determines proximity”\textsuperscript{319}. To me this seems to be partly based on an illusion of a romanticised idea of the tight-knit local communities of the past. It is nonetheless true that the increase in distance together with the complication in the forms of proximity is surely making matters of interaction more complex in the so-called globalized era.

In imagining how it is possible to conceptualise urban environments together with a concurrent need for privacy, Bauman’s criticism towards the loosening of the definition of proximity could be balanced by Roland Barthes’ notion of idiorrhythmy. It describes an ideal way of living “in solitude but together”\textsuperscript{320}. This kind of “social solitude” or “being alone together”, according to a psychological point of view, which comes very close to that of Barthes’, “offers a way to think about urban societies and other states of being and belonging, even psychologically extreme ones, while preserving difference and individuality”\textsuperscript{321}. The notion of tolerance also comes strongly into the picture without forgetting pleasure as a necessary ingredient of both private and social life. On a larger scale, this approach is capable of directing attention to the little studied fact of how the presence of others as such can be conducive of positive spatio-aesthetic experiences.

\textsuperscript{318} Or “glocalised”, as Bauman defines this era in his more recent writings, emphasising the polarisation of global and local levels.

\textsuperscript{319} Bauman 2003, 62.


\textsuperscript{321} Coleman 2014, 496.
V Preaesthetic Experiences and their Relation to Aesthetic Experiences

In this chapter, I propose the notion of “preaesthetic” in order to refer to a plethora of prerequisites that exist, take place before, or somehow otherwise contribute to actual aesthetic experiences. In other words, the preaesthetic can be that which precedes aesthetic experience but which also already contains some of its components. Besides occurring as temporally preceding, preaesthetic factors can also overlap with aesthetic experiences and thus also simultaneously participate in them. The cases in which preaesthetic qualities of experience make the aesthetic experience actually impossible are most revealing and thus of interest. Reactions to distractions or negative emotions to the surrounding conditions reveal a great deal about the relationship with the environment and how it becomes manifested in aesthetic experiences, which are understood here mainly following the outlines of aesthetic engagement.

Under inspection here is the possibility of determining what are these preaesthetic factors that affect experience. The notion of pre-aesthetic can be understood to cover a set of prerequisites for experiencing something as aesthetic. Eventually it is clarified, what this means in the context of space and how it is experienced. In the scope of my study it is especially interesting to picture how the relation with the space experienced closest affects and makes aesthetic experiences possible or impossible. It seems that this kind of notion of “preaesthetic” can be
understood by comparing it with some aspects of the more prominent concept of “aesthetic attitude”.

One possible approach is to define preaesthetic either as describing the possible pleasure that precedes aesthetic experience or the conditions and the overall context that contribute to the taking place or the occurrence of an aesthetic experience. The concept of preaesthetic I develop in this chapter calls for a re-evaluation of some of the recent accounts of aesthetic experience, which treat this experience as a form of engagement. From my perspective their significant misgiving is that according to them this state is easily attainable or even axiomatic, without properly acknowledging the role of the factors leading to aesthetic engagement.

The more general hypothesis I am promoting here is that spatial experience as such does not constitute an aesthetic experience. This is partly because it happens to a large extent on an unconscious, precognitive level. It might contain elements that lead towards the aesthetic but I link spatial experience, understood in the Bollnowian sense, to the perception of space and the various possibilities of the use of space. This difference is not always acknowledged. Spatial experience is often treated as one type of aesthetic experience as such. This, however, is misleading, since human beings are in a continuous relation to their surroundings and spatial experience has thus many varieties that are definitely not altogether aesthetic in nature. For example, in architectural analysis the emphasis can concentrate solely on the side of spatial experience when assessing built spaces. The neglect of a more holistic approach to aesthetic possibilities of experience renders built environments into forms experienced in three dimensions. The distinction between a spatial and a more comprehensive approach is, however, not easy to demonstrate even when reading some of the most biased architectural reviews, where vision, for example, still holds a central place in assessing a building.
Defining “Preaesthetic”

Here I summarise briefly, how and in which contexts the concept of preaesthetic has been previously used. This gives me the opportunity to then shortly synthesise these existing usages and propose a wider and redefined use for the concept, which in itself might include some of the already mentioned definitions. My investigation seeks to show that many of the previous uses are quite vague and almost unintentional, and not many actual attempts at a definition are to be found. The word is sometimes seen written with a hyphen as pre-aesthetic, but for the sake of uniformity I have used only the written form “preaesthetic”, since lately it seems to be preferred.

Preaesthetic Understood as Pre-Baumgartian

In a historical sense, the notion of preaesthetic has often referred to the time and thinking preceding the discipline of aesthetics, in other words the inauguration of the discipline by Baumgarten’s Aesthetica in 1750.\textsuperscript{322} Returning to the original Greek meaning Baumgarten carved the way for an understanding of aesthetics as a science of sensuous cognition. This is a definition that helps to sketch cultural history and the history of philosophy but reveals only one side that does not actually reveal much about the actual content of aesthetics. Especially so, since the matters concerning beauty, art, and sensory apparatus, just to mention a few, have been under scrutiny already before the established form of aesthetics as an academic discipline. As a relatively new branch of philosophy aesthetics has its roots in earlier philosophical discussions and pointing out this relation has been considered meaningful in order to solidify the role and status of the discipline.

This notion of the preaesthetic as preceding a historical phase of philosophy implies also that it is replaceable by other, newer notions. As a product of Western culture and philosophical thought more precisely, it entered the scene at a certain moment in history. The experience described as aesthetic is to some extent also directed by the discourse we use to discuss it. Also the experience itself may be

\textsuperscript{322} The concept of “aesthetics” is used for the first time by Baumgarten in Reflections on Poetry (1735). See Wallenstein 2013, 33.
adept at changing, even though we would not have the capacities to consider what kind of changes these would turn out to be. This implies a possibility of a postaesthetic phase with its multiple ramifications. These tentative remarks have to be taken into consideration when assessing the aesthetic through the notion of preaesthetic as something temporally preceding the developments in the field.

What Baumgarten describes by aesthetic is closely tied to the sensuous. In this sense, the Baumgartian aesthetic contains some elements of the preaesthetic, as it is mainly understood today. Baumgarten already pointed in the direction that there are two fundamental parallel ways in which humans experience the world: the logical and the aesthetic. This distinction has to be kept in mind in order to understand later definitions of the preaesthetic in relation to the aesthetic.

**Artistic Creation and Experience as Preaesthetic**

Historically, Plato can be considered to be the initiator of a certain tradition of preaesthetic understood as that which precedes artistic creation. As Plato is often interpreted, “the divine frenzy” of an artist is pre-aesthetic in the sense that it is a necessary condition for the artwork to emerge.323 Even though Plato does not obviously use the actual concept of preaesthetic, it has later been used in this sense to refer to artistic inspiration. One problem with this kind of usage is that it implies that the notions of aesthetic and artistic are interchangeable. However, they should not be confused with each other, especially since the field of the aesthetic has been enlarging and systematically seems to continue to do so. Simply put, artistic refers specifically to the sphere of art, whereas aesthetic has as its reference a much wider sphere of phenomena with aesthetic connotations. The notion of art is often also tied to the institutionalised forms of art, even though this also seems to be falling apart somewhat with recent changes in the sphere of and concept of art which have been taking place for the past fifty years.

Continuing the same line of thought, Russian formalists Boris Eikhenbaum and Viktor Shklovsky, for example, brought up the notion of preaesthetic in their literary criticism as the first stage of artistic creation.324 Again the notion of

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323 Plato, Phdr. 234d.
the primeval is linked to that of the preaesthetic. A similar pattern of thought can be recognised in Benedetto Croce’s notion of intuition, as it refers to artistic creation and art as expression.325

In art discourse and especially in art criticism the notion of preaesthetic seems to be tied to some kind of idealised notion of originality or primitivity, as in this example: “Bacon made work that was not only resolutely non-abstract but reminded us of a whole preaesthetic understanding of art.”326 Or used this way: “You could look at those very rough ‘Masks,’ for instance, as bearing some sort of relation to a pre-aesthetic, maybe even pre-subjective sort of experience.”327 Preaesthetic is harnessed here to emphasise the independency from or self-sufficiency with regard to the norms of the contemporary art world. Instead of actually preceding the current art trends they portray an attempt to distance oneself from tradition and evoke a sense of spontaneity, a trait that is often considered “primitive” in art discourse. In this sense this usage is related to the same mythology of artistic creation as Plato’s “divine frenzy”. It seems inherent for this view that the level of critical success is measured by how well the artist’s experience is transferred to the audience via his chosen medium. In this sense, intention can also be understood as preaesthetic in that it precedes the actual taking of form in an artwork.

More generally in the field of design, usability issues and focus on other functions preceding the designed form are considered “preaesthetic”. This echoes the old adage of industrial design that “form follows function”. In design theory, the primal desire to creative production has been sometimes romanticised in the same vain as in the case of Plato’s description of artistic creation as a “preaesthetic” necessity and urge stemming from the individual. This brings to mind how Allen Carlson and Glen Parsons describe functional beauty that could also be titled “functional aesthetics”. This kind of approach takes into consideration that function determines not only the form and outer appearance but also more directly affects the appreciation any object or functional feature

326 Butler 2013.
327 Tumlin 2007.
Relation of Preaesthetic to the Processes of Aestheticisation

Cultural studies and critical theory both seem to attach the notion of preaesthetic to the phenomenon of aesthetisation, which they address from their own relatively wide perspectives. According to Russell Berman, for example, today the preaesthetic dimension of social life scarcely exists anymore, and this is the result of the “total aesthetization of life”. Welsch in his turn gives a fourfold account of this aestheticisation process. It includes “everyday surface aestheticization” understood as dominance of the visual culture, “technological and media aestheticization of our material and social reality”, aestheticisation of “practical attitudes in life and of moral orientation”, and finally the fundamental “epistemological aestheticization” which Kant was first to describe.

Despite the kind of attuned analyses of the process such as presented by Welsch, aestheticisation is understood nowadays generally as a negative phenomenon, as something that pervades the whole society and overshadows some previous, more genuine forms of cultural and social life. This kind of cultural criticism seems to take a judgmental and negative stance towards the aesthetic seeing it as fundamentally shallow or superficial. The preaesthetic, although not defined in a clear way, thus gains an almost nostalgic aura opposed to the corruptive pervasiveness of the aesthetic.

Preaesthetic as an Approach to Art

In his analysis on Adorno and Derrida, Christoph Menke shows that the notion of preaesthetic is also tied to a specific understanding of art. Preaesthetic is thus presented as something that precedes meaning and even a possibility of interpretation. In this sense it is of help to compare art with cult objects. To us these become understood, for example, by the cult function of primitive art. As

328 See Allen & Parsons 2009.
329 See Berman 1989.
331 See Menke 1999.
Adorno crystallises his view on different layers present in the reception of art:

The tendency to perceive art either in extra-aesthetic or preaesthetic fashion [...] is not only a barbaric residue or a danger of regressive consciousness. Something in art calls for this response. Art perceived strictly aesthetically is art aesthetically misperceived.\(^{332}\)

Perceiving art only on a preaesthetic level thus represents a crude regression, one that compromises the totality of the artwork. Yet by the same token, somewhat surprisingly, it also seems to be necessary and required to a certain extent. In the same way, according to Adorno, Hegel considers natural beauty preaesthetic, since it is not yet thoroughly bound by spirit.\(^{333}\) All in all, Adorno deals with the preaesthetic in increasingly negative terms and opposes it with the cultivation of a superior and more distanced level:

Aesthetic cultivation leads away from the preaesthetic contamination of art and reality. The distance acquired, which is its result, not only reveals the objective character of the artwork. It also affects the subjective comportment, in that it severs primitive identifications and puts the recipient qua empirical psychological person out of action, which benefits his relation to the work.\(^{334}\)

It has to be added that this same mistrust or negative view is echoed in statements of less precise tone throughout the history of modern aesthetics. The notion of the preaesthetic is not always explicitly used but implicitly assumed. The approach these views represent defines preaesthetic as the non-aesthetic approach to art. In these accounts art is implicitly considered to be a sort of changing, organic form that is affected by different, often contradictory demands. Art is thus at the centre of attention, not aesthetic experience as such. Assigning value judgments to different approaches to art also takes for granted that the preaesthetic level is necessarily an inferior level of appreciation.

\(^{332}\) Adorno 2002, 6.
\(^{333}\) Adorno 2002, 76.
\(^{334}\) Adorno 2002, 243.
Pre-aesthetic as a Phase of Analysis

Partly coinciding with the preceding notion of the preaesthetic, one of the most coherent and actual definitions of preaesthetic comes from Roman Ingarden, who names the three phases of aesthetic inquiry as preaesthetic, aesthetic, and postaesthetic. Preaesthetic thus describes here the investigative phase of an analysis. It has a decisively more conscious connotation according to Ingarden compared to Adorno. Ingarden uses the notion of preaesthetic cognition to further describe the three-fold interpretation of a literary text. Ingarden claims that this level of aesthetic cognition precedes the actual immersion into the text at hand. It is the level of offhand, leisurely browsing. The postaesthetic stage of aesthetic analysis takes into consideration previous interpretations and the context of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

Ingarden’s phenomenological analysis can be approached as a conceptualised interpretation of an aesthetic experience, with its emphasis on the cognitive dimension. It seems especially apt for the purposes of literary criticism for which it was originally intended. At the same time, it offers a relevant point of comparison to the notion of preaesthetic that is being outlined in this study. Some aspects of Ingarden’s theory might thus be applicable to somatically and aesthetically more comprehensive situations where forming an experience is based on other than textual sources.

Ingarden also describes the specific attitude that is required in order to launch and concentrate on the process of aesthetic analysis:

We can cognize, in an investigating attitude, the piece of marble, which is called today the “Venus of Milo”, only in the way that we accomplish the whole series of visual, tactile, or other perceptions which do not necessarily follow one another continuously. In each of these perceptions, we have not only to become clearly conscious of what is given to us (what kind of object, of what kind of properties); but also to realize if what is given to us is given in such a way and in such circumstances that we are right in acknowledging it to

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335 This division is also maintained by Eugene F. Kaelin, who structures Ingarden’s theory into a rigid methodology of phenomenological structuralism; cf. Kaelin 1999.
appertain to an object as its property, immanent in it. Thus, besides the perception itself, there comes here into account some judgements expressing its results, then the comparison of the results of particular perceptions, binding them with one another and a steady taking into consideration of the objective and subjective conditions in which the perception has been accomplished (e.g., the lighting of the interior, the neighborhood of other objects in the field of perception, and even the presence of such objects which, though not entering themselves the field of perception, cause a transitory change of the object in question, or at least the occurrence, in perception, of some of its apparent properties; our psychic condition during the perception – e.g., some emotional disturbances, the condition of our sense organs, etc.). These conditions are taken into account with the aim of considering their influence on the data of our perceptions.336

Ingarden describes here the objective and subjective conditions that influence how an object is perceived and thus how the experience is moulded. Similarly changes in surrounding space and in its perception affect the overall experience. On the other hand, this acknowledgment leads to the direction of the relation between an object and its environment and whether such a distinction is even possible.

According to the aesthetic engagement view one could assume that the object of aesthetic experience also exists in a unity with its environment in a way that dissolves any real distinctions between the object and its surrounding environment. I, however, would emphasise that spatial conditions, for example, also affect objects and activities in a way that allows handling them somewhat separately from the aesthetic phenomena themselves. It is clear that the engagemental perspective emphasises the unity of experience but it seems that inscribed in it there also exists a somewhat naturalised conception of space that presumes it to be a precondition from which the aesthetic is able to emerge.

Ingarden also admits that some of the conditions can be overlooked in favour of the aesthetic experience to emerge. This process of apprehending and preliminary inspection of the appearance of an aesthetic possibility, object, or

activity described by Ingarden could be labelled preaesthetic “cognizing work”. Ingarden, however, counts this as “aesthetic perception”, thus taking place already in the sphere of the aesthetic.337 This seems to be a question of interpreting the effect of the conditions either as complementary or anticipatory elements in the aesthetic experience. In examining the factors of spatial experience, their effect can indeed be to take place in both phases. The effect of spatial experience on aesthetic experience can be evaluated as being on a sliding scale. In some occasions, urban environments or performance arts for example, the effect is obviously more fundamental. In literary art and in various practices of appreciating music the influence of spatial factors is essentially a much smaller one, albeit still existing.

**Psychoanalytical and Psychological Perspectives on Preaesthetic**

Interestingly, in developmental psychology the concept of preaesthetic is also used when describing different phases of aesthetic experience whether on an individual or a developmental level. The *preaesthetic stage* is the first phase when moving towards the “full-blown” experience. It seems that it is not as well documented or analysed though than the rest of the process.

In the context of psychoanalysis one can refer to the preaesthetic in relation to “early object relations, to the hidden, pre-aesthetic, pre-linguistic origins of creative activity as characterized in the psychoanalytic theories of Winnicott (1971) and Kristeva (1986)”338 Again, the notions of originality, primitivity, and artistic creation persist in defining the preaesthetic.

These two detectable main lines mirror the overall division into two strands of defining the preaesthetic: it is either linked to the aesthetic experience or appreciation or to the creative process of an artist.

**Preaesthetic Qualities in the Sphere of the Everyday**

Most recently, *preaesthetic qualities and experiences* have been described and categorised within the field of everyday aesthetics. According to Thomas Leddy, there “exist what I have called pre-aesthetic experiences that provide low-level aesthetic

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337 Ingarden 1961, 293.
pleasure”. And he continues by pointing towards evolutionary aesthetics:

The pre-aesthetic refers to what I have called low-level aesthetic properties such as “pretty” and “pleasant”, or what Scruton calls “minimal beauties”. The “proto-aesthetic” refers to what comes prior to actual aesthetic experience in evolutionary or childhood developmental terms. When Dissanayake speaks of the infant as having innate preferences for certain treatments of sights, sounds and movements she says that they are not quite aesthetic, but “proto-aesthetic”.

Leddy juxtaposes the “major league” aesthetic concepts such as harmony, beauty, balance, and the sublime and the “minor league” concepts such as neatness and messiness “conceding that in some contexts the latter may more properly be referred to in terms of ‘pre-aesthetic’ or ‘proto-aesthetic’ qualities.” Leddy seems to be giving a plausible definition to these concepts with the acknowledgment that the notion of protoaesthetic is not interchangeable with that of preaesthetic.

Leddy counts as preaesthetic certain “smaller” aesthetic qualities such as “neat”, “messy”, “pretty”, “lovely”, “cute”, and “pleasant”. Despite the fact that Leddy considers these qualities openly inferior, one is led to think whether they can still constitute some sort of “threshold experiences” that lead towards a deeper engagement. Aesthetic engagement, disengagement, as well as alienation are understood here not only as intellectual, cognitive activity but as being thoroughly sensory and bodily in nature. According to Berleant, this kind of neat categorising seems, however, implausible if not even impossible. As with acknowledging the negative in aesthetics, one should not give in to the temptation of trying to categorise these negative aspects of aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience as an engagement and interaction usually consists of a melange of felt, sensed, or imagine qualities.

Leddy describes the pleasure that is derived from neatness, orderliness, or uncluttered space. These qualities are closely related to the preaesthetic nature of

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339 Leddy 2012, 204.
340 Ibid.
341 Dowling 2012.
spatial experience that is being described here. Cleaning or organising as a practice situated in everyday environments is also spatial by its nature and refers to the obvious satisfaction introduced by the act of creating space through organising.\textsuperscript{343} This activity does not actually “create” space, however, but is instead related to the sense of control over its use that is acquired through possession and control over the objects that reside in the particular space in question.

\textbf{Preaesthetic in Terms of Evolutionary Aesthetics}

Within the relatively new field of evolutionary aesthetics the notion of the pre-aesthetic has been used to describe various aspects of beauty, which precede in different ways the cognitive aesthetic experience. Darwin’s descriptions of the beauty of nature is explained by Wolfgang Welsch in preaesthetic terms:

> The first one is found in “low animals” like corals, sea-anemones, or some jelly-fish that “are ornamented with the most brilliant tints, or are shaded and striped in an elegant manner.” Darwin explains this pre-aesthetic type of beauty as “the direct result either of the chemical nature or the minute structure of their tissues.” Such beauty just happened to arise as a physiological effect, without the implication of any aesthetic function. Only after the development of an aesthetic sense could such pre-aesthetic beauty be esteemed as beautiful. Originally it was not an aesthetic matter at all.\textsuperscript{344}

Welsch suggests also “a kind of pre-aesthetic analysis of the evolution of pleasure”, a “genealogical understanding of the constitution of the aesthetic”. Welsch continues by claiming that “aesthetic judgment is tinged with pleasure. So being capable of pleasure is as elementary a condition for the aesthetic as are emotional and intellectual capacities.” Thus a certain “structure and development of pleasure” is implied and even required.\textsuperscript{345} Non-human living entities without

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item As a recent artistic example of the satisfaction derived from organising, Swiss artist Ursus Wehrli (b. 1969) documents in his photographs a process of organising everyday objects into immaculate formations according to shape, colour, and form or in alphabetical or conceptual order, a method referred to also as “knolling”. See Wehrli 2013.
\item Welsch 2004.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
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the concept of the aesthetic, a genealogy of pleasure, or a sense of beauty are excluded from the upper tier of the aesthetic, so to speak.

Welsch describes the two-tiered nature of aesthetic experience:

While the vital pleasure could be compared with the ground floor of a building, the aesthetic pleasure corresponds to a storey situated above this, a *piano nobile*, where, once elementary needs have been satisfied, a reflexive pleasure is enjoyed, one which judges its objects not as necessary or useful, but as beautiful, harmonic, sublime or superior.\(^{346}\)

Even though Welsch does not use the term preaesthetic in this case, the “vital pleasure” seems to point in that direction.

In the same vein, Krystyna Wilkoszewska defines pre-aesthetic in an evolutionary tone:

We could distinguish the following phases: *pre-aesthetic beauty* (stripes, shades and patterns on the body devoid of aesthetic implications); proto-aesthetic beauty (colors of flowers and fruit, “attracting attention”; “striking the eye”, which signifies orientation at building certain relation attracting insects and birds to achieve pollination); beauty in its proper meaning directed at the aesthetic sense; this beauty occurs within a single species, in the intersexual relation – the beauty of a male is addresses at [sic] the sense of beauty of the female.\(^{347}\)

Preaesthetic in evolutionary aesthetics is thus also related to a “phase” of perceiving beauty that depends on the quality and complexity of the sort of beauty that is under observation. However, I find this explanation somewhat anthropocentric in what it defines as beautiful or how it is defined in the first place by means of the human notion of the beautiful as its central concept.

The aspects of development and change and different kinds of phases are central in evolutionary aesthetics and this point of view can help to assess how sensory experiences may or may not turn into “full-blown” aesthetic experiences. The prefix “pre-” is used in a way that parallels somewhat the notion of “prehistoric”. Some similarities are to be found when compared with the notion of

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\(^{346}\) Welsch 1997, 11.

\(^{347}\) Wilkoszewska 2012, 6.
“pre-ethical” when it refers to non-human living entities, a hypothetical period in human history, or a phase in infant development.348

Not directly related to evolutionary aesthetics but associated with it, there is to be found within embodiment theory a notion of “meanings-in-the-making” as “proto-meanings” or “immanent meanings” that “cannot just pop into existence (arise in our consciousness) out of nothing and from nowhere. Instead, they must be grounded in our bodily connections with things, and they must be continuously ‘in the making’ via our sensorimotor engagements.”349 Though not referring directly to the notion of preaesthetic here, Johnson importantly emphasises the direct relation of further cognitive processes to the sensorimotor system.

In summarising these previously presented approaches, there are evidently numerous links and entanglements between different usages of the word “preaesthetic”. The main interest here is to not to dwell more deeply on the semantic web of meanings but to offer one more coherent view of how the notion of preaesthetic can be used in order to understand better the relation between spatial experience and aesthetic experiences.

As a conclusion from this concise taxonomy of the preaesthetic one can deduce there is no single clear definition to be found but instead it is more like a collection of converging definitions. Assumed meanings and offhand references to something temporally preceding and possibly thus an idolised moment or quality are common. These references share the fact that they often refer to a temporally preceding aspect in some part of the process of art or aesthetic appreciation. Total unanimity does not seem to exist on whether preaesthetic qualities or features are pre-cognitive either. Actually, none of these previous examples of usage seems to refer to the aesthetic experience directly. The preaesthetic as a stage of philosophical inquiry or as an element of creative activity seems to be almost exclusively tied to different notions of art. The preaesthetic is thus often used in an evaluative sense as in the case of so-called “primitive art”. The

preaesthetic is, however, not to be confused with the proto-aesthetic or any of the definitions attached to the notion of the primitive.

What we can say in general is that the notion of preaesthetic possibly not surprisingly follows the notion of aesthetic in how it is applied in the field of art. Only somewhat recently has it been applied to a wider range of phenomena, specifically with the advent of evolutionary aesthetics and everyday aesthetics. The preaesthetic as revealing something of the processual nature of experience has thus slowly gained more attention.

**Spatial Experience as a Preaesthetic Experience**

Defining spatial experience as preaesthetic implies that not all of the previously presented usages are taken into account. By definition, preaesthetic is understood here as a collection of factors that precede the aesthetic as its prerequisite. This is most clearly shown in the way aesthetic potentialities actualise in aesthetic experiences. The immediate lived experience of space is one of these preaesthetic factors, but there are others as well. This immediacy is part of the nature of spatial experience. Its character is most often unclear or still in an un-organised state. Spatial and aesthetic experiences necessarily overlap to some extent. I have gathered here the main aspects that help to assess why it is useful to ascribe spatial experiences to the realm of the preaesthetic.

1) Spatial features that affect our stance in a given situation necessarily also affect where the attention is drawn. Perception is affected by position, location and navigation in space but also by inter-subjective relations and their changing physical formations in space.

2) The presence of other people is of great influence, depending on many other variables in the situation. Being alone or together with someone or part of a bigger group also affects the experience. Physical distance, closeness, or even intimacy to others creates different kinds of conditions
for aesthetic experiences. This goes both for specific art environments such as galleries or any kind of everyday situation in both public and private spheres of life.

3) These preaesthetic effects are not merely explainable with the traditional notion of a specific *aesthetic attitude*. It is relevant to take into consideration the aesthetic attitude though, since it also assumes something significant taking place before or otherwise affecting the possibility of an aesthetic experience. This temporal precedence of the actual aesthetic experience has been noted in psychological research as well.

The preaesthetic then describes both the very conditions and the initial experience of them needed in order for the aesthetic experience to be even possible. The traditional notion of the sublime is central here, since it already acknowledges the existence of a set of prerequisites for the sublime experience. The sublime is also described in spatial terms, as “great beyond measure”. The variation between the sense of danger and safety, even physical hindrances to perception, among other things, are the kind of experiences that would require further pondering together with the spatial features that go with them.

Pauline von Bonsdorff describes the web-like nature of aesthetic experience in an enlightening way for this specific context:

> Perceptual experience is temporal, but it can be analyzed as consisting of different components. Sensation, praxis, imagination or understanding pick out aspects of the whole which are not isolated, but mix in experience. Aesthetic experience, whatever else it is, is a similar mix. In its relation to other experiences and to the world, it might be approached in terms of a rhizome or a complex that is related to other complexes, of which some but not all may be subaltern to it. This kind of thinking can better accommodate relations between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic and consider aesthetic phenomena through traits or qualities.350

350 Von Bonsdorff 1998b, 79.
With this kind of rhizome\textsuperscript{351} or net model of experience, one can better understand the relation between spatial and aesthetic experiences. Instead of just adding another layer to aesthetic experience, spatial experience constitutes the prerequisites for this experience. It regulates to some extent, as one of the factors, the limits of aesthetic experience. The network of qualities, their variations, and the oscillations between them constitute the actual experience. This does not mitigate an emphasis on the aesthetic. On the contrary, it underlines its value by pointing out how it is either suppressed or supported by the changing and changeable conditions of the environment.

Wolfgang Welsch divides the aesthetic understood as sensuous experience into two parts, consisting of the aesthetic and the elevatory element. The elevatory element implies the presence of “a cultivated attitude”, even though Welsch acknowledges that recently, the importance of this kind of attitude has been diminishing concerning the aesthetic understood as sensuous. From the aesthetic part Welsch discerns both the elements of sensation and perception, the former which he names more subjective and evaluative and the latter more objective and cognitive. Sensation is tied to pleasure, whereas perception deals with information, the output of the environment, so to speak. Welsch mentions that depending on the emphasis, either one of these elements, sensation or perception, can become more prominent.\textsuperscript{352} I would assume, however, that in any situation either of the two elements is already initially more dominant. I disagree with the point that Welsch makes about “objective ascertainment” being within the scope of perception.\textsuperscript{353} When it comes to the perception of space by different senses, for example, one might have an illusion of being objective about it. Instead, multiple personal and subjective factors affect how this perception eventually turns out.

“A sort of distancing always belongs to the aesthetic,” Welsch emphasises.\textsuperscript{354} This distance, cognitive or attitude-based, is a recurrent and persistent theme

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[351] See Deleuze & Guattari 1980.
\item[352] Welsch 1997, 10–11.
\item[353] Welsch 1997, 10.
\item[354] Welsch 1997, 11.
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in aesthetic theory. It is as interesting to parallel the “move” from the aesthetic to the elevatory element in experience as the move from the preaesthetic to the level of the aesthetic. Following Welsch’s thought, the question would be, can the preaesthetic be understood as the interplay between the complementary parts of sensation and perception that form the aesthetic semantic level of the aesthetic?

The notion of “preaesthetic” describes here the level of experience that precedes and participates in the aesthetic experience. It could also be used to describe qualities and circumstances in our environment which promote aesthetic experiences. For my research, spatial circumstances constitute the most relevant areas of attention. The reaction to these qualities of surroundings and situation could thus be described as the preaesthetic antecedent of an aesthetic experience. By this I refer to emotions such as pleasure, awe, astonishment, hesitation, fear, and even to some extent pain, just to mention a few.

Evolutionary aesthetics reminds us that the ability of a human being to define and interpret space on the sensory level is most probably innate. For other species this might be different but our understanding of their a priori categories is necessarily limited. Preceding this line of thought, Kant among others treats aesthetics as a fundamental epistemological discipline in his transcendental aesthetics. Space and time are understood as an *a priori* framework for all knowledge. This does not determine how the perception functions in actual situation but emphasises the absolute necessity of space and time as “forms of intuition”. I only mention this somewhat superficially here in order to point out the fundamentality of space and time for all knowledge and in that sense, for being in the world and interpreting it. In this sense, perception of space epistemologically *precedes* the fundamentally aesthetic way of making sense of the world. The Kantian *a priori* categories are *pre-epistemological* in this wider sense. Or, as Welsch puts it in his interpretation, they provide us with “a principal protoaesthetic of cognition”. This prevalence of the aesthetic for cognition and for “our representations of reality” is eventually fixed by Nietzsche and points towards the solidifying of “the aesthetic constitution of reality”.

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Aesthetic Experience as Engagement

Fixed attention leads to an absorbed mindset that thus forms into one of the key elements of aesthetic pleasure. This attention can be diverted by factors preceding or leading to the aesthetic situation. In a sense, the direction of the aesthetic pleasure posits us in the world. This is also why presumptions of the quality of future aesthetic experiences are nearly impossible to make. Planning to have or aiming at providing someone with an aesthetic experience is a complex task without a promise of a clear or obvious outcome. As Ingarden reminds us, “the so-called ‘aesthetic experience’ is no single composite experience but a certain number of experiences connected with one another”. This kind of perspective opens up a possibility of considering the relation experiences have with the environments in which they take place.

Contextual aesthetics takes into account the broad range of environmental factors related to aesthetic experiences. Berleant’s notion of aesthetic experience as engagement has moved the focus towards interaction, participation, involvement, and mutually active relation between the perceiver and the environment. The juxtaposition between the object and the subject is also supposed to dissolve as a consequence of this. A sort of merging and exaltation seems to be included in aesthetic experience understood as engagement. Berleant refers to “open experience” when describing aesthetic experience as engagement with the environment. The effect of spatial experience on aesthetic experience is directly related to the openness of experience since it determines the ramifications in the first place. Spatial conditions set the very materialistic conditions for experiences and direct them towards different possibilities.

The aesthetic experience does not necessarily include a sense of involvement. Personal qualities, histories, ingrained ways of thinking all affect one’s openness to the experience and the readiness to let oneself get involved. In cases where this

357 See also “Institutionalised” Aesthetic Experiences in Chapter IV.
358 Ingarden 1961, 294.
359 This resonates again with the theory of enactivism (e.g. in cognitive science and psychology), which puts an emphasis on embodiment and interaction with the environment.
involvement is clearly missing, the experience is disengaging in a sense of not being able to connect because of some hindrances. External conditions, moreover, can lead to further drifting away or even being totally alienated from the potential aesthetic quality of the situation. Distractedness also functions in this way: when the mind is occupied, the attention needed in recognising the aesthetic is not as easily found. In addition, the role of affective reactions should not to be underestimated: thrills, excitement, contentment, even disappointment, and so on, are examples of strong affects that colour and tinge aesthetic experiences.360

Berleant’s notion of aesthetic engagement has been influential in the scope of environmental aesthetics that originally had natural environments as its focus. This is understandable, since turning the focus on engagement offers the possibility of assessing and evaluating environments through the effect they have on people. This effect makes certain types of engagements possible and hinders others. This is a kind of reversed way of understanding aesthetic engagement, but in my opinion it emphasises what is being investigated here, namely the role of preaesthetic factors in aesthetic experiences. This almost symbiotic relationship between a person and the environment leads to a sort of engagemental coupling. Merely enouncing this relationship is important, since the intensity of engagement seems somewhat related to it being acknowledged.

The reciprocity of the engagement bears some interesting similarities with the hermeneutic process as presented by Hans-Georg Gadamer.361 An interpretation of the environment itself becomes created as a result of this process as well. Engagement can be considered the first step towards interpretation, the description of the moment that makes the interpretation possible albeit not necessary. This idea emphasises the role of enjoyment and instant appreciation in aesthetic engagement, but can also take the form of respect and the instant realisation that something important is present even though not yet fully understood. This openness to different ends is in my recognition typical of aesthetic engagement.

The interconnectedness of the human being and the environment prevalent

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360 For the role of affective and experiential capacities in aesthetic experience and the context of art and the fear of losing these capacities, see Shusterman 2001.
361 See e.g. Gadamer 2004.
in Eastern thinking has been somewhat difficult to grasp from the perspective of Western philosophy. The deeply-rooted mind – body dichotomy even affects aspects of the relation with nature that seem untouched by it at first glance. The pervasiveness of this dichotomy is deeply rooted in language and the ways it is traditionally used. According to empirical research done within the field of environmental psychology, aesthetic experiences are understood as a “transac-tional relationship between the affective state of the perceiver and a diverse and idiosyncratic range of features of the physical environment”. This supports the ideas presented in the context of environmental aesthetics.

Everyday aesthetic experience is a fascinating oxymoron at first glance, since the everyday is often associated with monotony and the boring repetitiveness of daily routines, whereas aesthetic experiences are considered to be the highlights prevalent in special occasions of life. This qualitative difference is sometimes aggravated in certain circumstances to a point where everyday experiences and aesthetic experiences are even seen as the exact opposites of each other. The exceptionality of aesthetic experiences becomes questionable, however, when considering the notion of the aesthetic more closely and when the aesthetic becomes detached from the actual felt intensity of an experience.

Understanding cognition as embodied emphasises the artificiality of the subject – object divide. For Berleant this separation also becomes effaced in the process of aesthetically engaging with the environment. The emphasis is on committing, participating, or fixing attention. Johnson in turn ties the notion of aesthetic experience to the experience of quality. This is an interesting, yet somewhat controversial point of view. There is no clear, defining peak to this kind of experience; it is more of a continuing process by type. This idea of a processual experience has been opposed by referring to specific kinds of experiences that imply a clear turning point. Vitality affects “are not the classic emotions like fear, anger, surprise, and joy. Rather, they are the patterns of flow and development

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363 For how this distinction is developed in psychology of art and experimental aesthetics, see e.g. Marković 2012.
of our experience.” For example “rush” expresses a certain kind of pattern of bursting that can be manifest in many very different kinds of contexts.365

Both Tuan and Johnson chart the early phases of an infant’s coming to terms with how the body is related to the surrounding world. Especially according to Johnson, the pre-linguistic lived world is the basis of an adult’s conceptualised experience and meaning-making process to a far larger extent than is usually granted.366 This kind of developmental approach underlines the role of learning in the process of acquiring the necessary skills for forming coherent experiences. New experiences are not independent of old ones but build extensively on them, thus accumulating the capability for acknowledging the aesthetic qualities of experience.

From the point of view of aesthetic experiences I aim to develop in this chapter, Johnson’s account of the relation of the aesthetic to the environment is useful in deepening the notion of engagement Berleant develops. This becomes especially clear, since there are “different affordances to different organisms, or even to the same organism at different times”.367 The environment can thus support or impede the experience and benefit of certain affordances. Johnson maintains that what is perceived as an object, is actually a more or less stable event or pattern in perceptual process.368 In a sense, this also goes to show that some environments are more likely to provoke a perceptually engaging relationship than others. It is as if they provide not only more input, but also differing greater variety of qualities and vibrant possibilities attached to them in order to arouse a proper “engagemental relation”. This is especially fitting to describe the role of spatial features of the environment, since they clearly offer different kinds of affordances.

365 Johnson 2007, 42.
367 Johnson 2007, 46.
368 Ibid.
Distractions or the Unreliability and Vagueness of Aesthetic Experiences

A certain persistent lack of clarity seems to prevail when it comes to defining aesthetic experiences. This occurs especially in situations in which the experience is not altogether clear or when it is otherwise disturbed by something that would be considered external to it. These vague, “contaminated” experiences need more scrutiny if we wish to understand how some elements of spatial experiences affect aesthetic experiences in a positive way, eventually even blending into them, while other spatial factors seem to prevent the aesthetic side of experience from emerging at all.

The role of disturbances and distractions is very different within the spheres of art experiences and those of everyday aesthetic experiences. In the art context the most traditional situation for an aesthetic experience to occur is when a solitary visitor is observing and assessing an artwork in a contemplative manner. Art is still most often associated with being presented in artificial environments, that shut out the quotidian and natural worlds and that are controlled and directed by curatorial and directorial professionals who strive to create an atmosphere that is “pure” and without distraction so that we can give our entire attention over to the object in front of us.369

In everyday life this kind of situation is rarely possible even though one might against the odds strive for it. In general, striving for a non-distracted everyday leads only to frustration since, as everyone knows, everyday life consists of haphazard incidents, sudden situations, interruptions, and other unpredictable yet unavoidable factors. These are, on the other hand, precisely the things which make the everyday so compelling, admittedly challenging, but all the more interesting. The compelling nature of everyday life is to a large extent related to the effect that the actions of other people have on us and the distractions they provide. Such effects are multiple since the ways of others are unknowable even

369 Forsey 2013, 196.
to themselves most of the time, or so it would seem.

Same kind of vagueness is central in the following description by Ingarden, in which he explains why some details are – and have to be – overlooked in order to form a relatively cohesive aesthetic experience:

The reason for overlooking some details in an aesthetic perception is a different one: the details to be overlooked “shock” us; if they were perceived, they would introduce a disharmonious factor into the field of what is in perception given to us, they would bring discordance in to the totality of an aesthetic object.370

I see this as a continuation of this same logic by which Jane Forsey shifts the notion of overlooking some factors to the context of conventions and unspoken rules within the spheres of art as well as in design production and reception. She cites Yuriko Saito in order to describe the unspoken rules that frame experiences and which also direct the experience in the sense of omitting some of the expectations while emphasising others:

Artworks are further distanced from the everyday by their metaphysical isolation as presented in a determinate form. […] Even when a frame is not literally apparent, there still remains a “conceptual understanding” of the boundaries of the object “such as the conventional agreement concerning the medium, the artist’s intention, the cultural and historical content and the like.” 371

Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s disputed notion of the willing suspension of disbelief points towards a special stance that a person adopts in order to enjoy something aesthetically.372 It is an attitude that the spectator at a play, for example, chooses to adopt in order to accept certain inconsistencies that take place when staging a play in the form that theatrical plays are usually presented.373 A sort of “willing suspension of discomfort” could thus be suggested as an analogous description to some other situations where a person decides to endure some difficulties in

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370 Ingarden 1961, 293.
371 Forsey 2013, 197. Citation from Saito: Saito 2007, 18–19.
372 See Coleridge 2004, ch. XIV.
373 For the relating notion of “the fourth wall” (originating from Denis Diderot) in theatre, see Bell 2008, 203.
order to allow the aesthetic to come forth. Willingness to give up a substantial part of one’s personal space in order to attend a live music concert is an example of this enduring of discomfort and distractions. Social contracts dictate many of these kinds of suspensions and they might not be easy to question either by the individual or on the institutional level. Some artists are known to rebel against established conventions; Glenn Gould for example had a strong preference for recorded music over uncomfortable concert situations. Also in some theatre performances the audience is further drawn to take part in the performance in unexpected ways. All in all, digital technologies are to some unforeseeable degree changing some of the conventions, even in areas where an actual physical presence has traditionally been considered irreplaceable.

On a more personal level, one is often required to willingly give away part of the control over oneself when it comes to being open to aesthetic experiences in the first place. This can have deep effects on one’s identity in some specific cases. Such a situation could be exemplified when one, even for some predetermined reason, momentarily renounces one’s own habitual set of experiential requisites in order to better immerse oneself in an aesthetic phenomenon. One could approach, for example, video art through this kind of perspective. The works are often shown in a darkened room in an exhibition gallery, where one can feel either oppressed by the darkness, the unpredictability of movement, and the presence of others or feel very liberated and uninhibited at the prospect of sitting still in the darkness and letting the screen “take over”. Even though this is not a very radical example as such, it shows quite clearly how conditions affect the propensity to open up to experiential aesthetic possibilities. This presents itself as a kind of “the end justifies the means” thinking. What is the amount and role of this conscious deliberation in the process of “surrendering to the aesthetic”? People have different kinds of abilities and often also unequal premises – let alone preferences – in the first place for cultivating the skills needed in this process of differentiation and the subsequent mental adaptation that can take place in a rather fast timeframe.

As a consequence, it seems correct to assume that unreliability, ambivalence and confusion inevitably belong to some extent to aesthetic experiences. There
have, however, been some attempts at challenging the idealised aesthetic experience in order to demonstrate a more realistic set of components that are present in the aesthetic experience. Kevin Melchionne, for example, calls this “aesthetic unreliability”, which “supports the view that our inner aesthetic lives are more anarchic, protean, and unknown than we have been willing to admit”.

The factors which affect situations include both internal and external phenomena ranging from emotions to obstructing structures of the physical world. To say the least, the abstruse aspects inherent in the formation of an aesthetic experience require acknowledging to some extent the seeming and often confusing randomness of aesthetic experiences. The aesthetic implicit in a situation might or might not “come forth” and thus its random nature can leave one quite puzzled. “The instability of our feelings over time is such that we are unsure if our responses are caused by our mood, factors in our environment, or the object to which we are attending.” By good design, in conventional aesthetically inclined exhibitions, the aesthetic experience can be enhanced or even intentionally produced in the first place. The situation-bound nature of the experience can well be detached from the actual reasons considered to be predominantly aesthetic and reattached to the so-called secondary features of the situation.

The phenomenon known as “the charm of novelty” serves as an example of the aforementioned instability of experience. Often something experienced for the first time triggers a greater reaction than on subsequent occasions. It is not a sign of lesser value, only a different kind of approach on the part of the experiencer. Challenging levels of complexity in artworks can affect experience

374 Melchionne 2012, ch. 1. On a side note, it seems technically speaking inaccurate to refer to the “feeling of beauty”. Instead, one could use the notion of “recognition of beauty” or “finding something beautiful”. Recognition always implies previous knowledge. A “feeling of beauty” would seem to imply that the beauty is somehow internalised in the same sense as in a “feeling of satisfaction”, for example.

375 Melchionne 2012, ch. 1.

376 Coleridge on Wordsworth, who sets “as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.” Coleridge 2004, ch. XIV.
as a counterexample to this description, resulting in the first impression actually being less impressive than subsequent ones. Thus the artwork presents itself as being not of lesser value, but only as functioning in different ways. Varying amounts and combinations of elements such as wonder, awe, marvelling, and pleasure thus accompany the experience.

The charm of novelty has not usually been linked in any successful way to most theorised aesthetic categories. However, it can be used to exemplify to some extent the transitory nature of aesthetic experiences. It assists in maintaining that one aspect of the aesthetic can be the element of surprise and intrigue that take place in recognising something interesting and fascinating that is not yet completely known. Within discussions on aesthetic experience, commonness and safety attached to familiarity thus become contrasted with beguiling strangeness. Kevin Melchionne touches upon the topic:

Pleasures become so habitual that we no longer recognize them as pleasurable. For the sake of familiarity, we let our prior taste stand proxy for our current experience.  

This resonates with habituation/dishabituation studies on infants done in the field of developmental psychology, which show that some small changes in expectations take place when confronted with something out of the ordinary. Dishabituation in a sense describes a slow awakening to the phenomenon of “the charm of novelty”. It is treating something new in this context as always projected from the position of being accustomed to the old and the familiar, as if the old defines beforehand the relation to that which is new. One can also conclude as a result of this that the length of attention affects the result of this sensitisation to new experiences, and on the other hand, that psychological frustration can result from many dysfunctions in any given new situation.

I am not questioning the significance and integrity of the experience itself, just directing part of the attention to the difficulty of attaining it and the volatile nature of focusing on the aesthetic factors. In the uncontestably fast-paced and impulse-filled world of today, it is especially fitting to reconsider the time and

377 Melchionne 2010, 131. See also Haapala 2005.
378 Johnson 2007, 34.
effort needed in order to cherish the more sensitive and evanescent experiences. Instead of concentrating on the epitomes of aesthetic experiences one could for a while consider the role and function of less clear and explicable experiences. Everyday aesthetics especially has brought this need into focus by pointing out that everyday experiences have intrinsic aesthetic value that needs to be acknowledged within the context of academic aesthetics. This has made it possible for aestheticians to respond to the challenge posed by psychologists and philosophers of consciousness when it comes to the way the mind functions.\textsuperscript{379} This seems inevitable if we are to understand the function of the cognitive aspects of the aesthetic experience, not only in order to recognise an aesthetic experience, but also to explain it and link its value to other values. These actions taking seemingly easily place in the experience however require significant cognitive skills and also strong trust in one’s aesthetic insight.

Scrutiny of one’s experience requires one to understand the constituencies of the experience, its origin and the fortunate conditions of fulfilled requirements that support it.\textsuperscript{380} This kind of more conscious aesthetic experience is not only within the realm of professional aestheticians but also in today’s aestheticized world an asset to all individuals. In order to investigate this further it seems that one must accept that actual, “full-fledged” aesthetic experiences might in reality be very rare even though our everyday lives are tinged with aesthetically potent situations\textsuperscript{381} on a rich scale of nuances. These nuances of the aesthetic embedded in the mundane are indeed worthy of more attention.

Deciding to be favourable towards something as aesthetic, legitimating negative aesthetic experiences, and taking hold of aesthetic phenomena are also products of conscious decision-making activity to a surprisingly high degree. The context-relatedness of aesthetic experiences has already been shown in numerous ways, and formalism applied as an approach in its purest form seems antiquated. However, a certain formalism still seems to prevail when it comes to

\textsuperscript{379} Melchionne 2012, ch. 6.
\textsuperscript{380} For felicity conditions described by J. L. Austin in his speech act theory, see Austin 1962.
\textsuperscript{381} Or “the hidden gems” as Yuriko Saito refers to them: “the ordinarily neglected, but gem-like, aesthetic potentials hidden behind the trivial, mundane, and commonplace façade”. Saito 2007, 50.
defining the experience itself. The basal uniformity of the aesthetic experience has been elaborated with concepts such as “aesthetic engagement” or “the aesthetic relation” but the unfixed state of these descriptions leaves them still largely open for discussion.

Healthy scepticism or further pondering on one’s experience is not traditionally favoured, because the myth of the aesthetic experience still asserts it to be something quite spontaneous and irrevocable, even when negative. Yet at the same time it is supposed to stay somewhat fixed, stable, and immutable after the initial recognition. Aesthetic experience can be paired with excitement and enthusiasm, calm contentment, or tinged with contradictions. In order to elaborate an aesthetic assessment the experience needs to be “sewn together”: it is made cohesive by rationally choosing to emphasise some particular aspects of the experience. This is how a critic, for example, works, but it also applies to a more common experience, when a cohesive account of an experience is needed.

Practical consequences of this kind of notion of the prerequisites of aesthetic experiences are indeed worthy of further consideration. Augmenting the possibilities of aesthetic situations can be realised within various practices. There is obviously a risk in what these possibilities are imagined to be. Adding a piece of art to a park when the environment is not otherwise cohesive in a sense that supports the aesthetic ideology behind the artwork is a very elementary example of this kind of practical action.

On many levels, different spheres of experience are merging more permanently due to changes in the contemporary world. In my opinion, the direct result of this is that the connections between architecture, art, and design have multiplied in recent years and the boundaries are becoming increasingly fluid. In the case of less risky, institutionalised aesthetic elements, such as artworks, there seems to be less questioning of the aesthetic quality of the object per se. But in cases where the experience is less directly spelled out by the established settings, and especially in cases that tilt more towards engagement, the conditions have more of an effect. This takes place specifically in cases in which the aesthetic qualities of an object as such are unclear or even dubious. This kind of consideration adds more uncertainty to the complex blend of factors that constitute the aesthetic.
However, the rewards and benefits are considerable and usually worth pursuing. In a sense, it is also immensely liberating to realise that sometimes even a slight element of change can improve experiences. Possibly on some other occasion the conditions and other contingencies will be better suited to favour the aesthetic. Sometimes perseverance can be of key importance in aesthetic experience. I understand that it is in this sense that Melchionne writes about the “anarchy of taste”:\textsuperscript{382}

Subjects have a contingent relationship to their self-appraisals, including those involving aesthetic experience. Yet the theory of taste has little to say about this side of our aesthetic lives. It is as if the concept of virtue had developed in moral theory without any consideration of vice, or truth in epistemology without any conception of bias.\textsuperscript{383}

He thus seems to propose a much more calculative, or at least much less spontaneous approach to aesthetic experiences and their interpretation. However, Melchionne acknowledges that experience is the basis for our aesthetic life, and as such, always an unpredictable one, no matter how manipulatable it might seem. Also, this direction points towards a mention of “the equilibrium between commissive taste and mindful experience”.\textsuperscript{384} Those often opposing elements have to be reconciled to a satisfying extent in order for the aesthetic experience to take place at all.

One can test the idea of spatial experience being a sort of an \textit{epiphenomenon} to aesthetic experience. Thus it can be seen as occurring alongside or in parallel to a primary phenomenon of aesthetic experience. Because a fixed order of value or precedence is impossible to attach to these modes of experiencing, this kind of model might be one possible way to explain their relation. This kind of model shows that a spatial mode of experience might sometimes overshadow or hinder the actual aesthetic mode of experience. In this context examples such as non-institutional spaces for presenting art can be illuminating. Reception of art in these spaces requires calibrating the experience in accordance with

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{382} Melchionne 2012, ch. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{383} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{384} Ibid.
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the unusual surroundings and recognising the spatial modalities that affect the aesthetic experience embedded in the given situation. The not altogether unproblematic decontextualising of aesthetic experience has taken place via the notion of disinterestedness to the extent that the consideration of the naturalised surroundings has yet to be worked on.

Aesthetic Attitude and Attention as Preceding Aesthetic Experiences

In order to widen successfully the notion of preaesthetic experience here it must be considered in relation to the notion of aesthetic experience. As pre-aesthetic already implies a certain notion of the aesthetic, it has to be portrayed against the backdrop of multiple uses of the aesthetic. Pre-aesthetic also contains the reference to the temporal dimension. It is something to be found or it takes place before the aesthetic.

The aesthetic experience referred to here follows most closely the outlines of aesthetic experience as aesthetic engagement, which was briefly presented earlier. It seems to me that a sort of pre-reflective relation to the surrounding space is being supposed here. Before the aesthetic experience can take place, some set of prerequisites have to be “in order”, so to speak. This does not, however, become emphasised explicitly enough and thus leaves one to wonder how environmental variables and contingencies actually contribute to the aesthetic experience. Not all of these variables are positive and favourable towards the emergence of the aesthetic; some elements bring “disharmony” and “discordance” to the experience. In a sense, evaluation of conditions leads to a balancing act where one has to take a stance whether the stakes to engage aesthetically are too high. Sometimes the aesthetic experience itself can be deemed to be too taxing or too involving. This might seem an unreasonably calculative approach but instead I believe that the self-regulation and even self-preservation of the experiencer is a decisive factor.385

In order to better understand its anticipatory nature, the notion of the preaesthetic in preaesthetic experiences can be compared with the notion of the *aesthetic attitude*. These two previously unrelated concepts can be seen as somewhat parallel with each other. The theory of the aesthetic attitude has been somewhat mitigated since George Dickie in his well-known article “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude” set out to argue that it is, indeed, a myth. In a corrective manner Dickie argues that what is being described as an aesthetic attitude has been used to defend either “distance” or “disinterestedness” with regard to the object of attention. Concerning this, as Dickie points out, “to distance’ and ‘being distanced’ simply mean that one’s attention is focused”.  

From Dickie’s account one can deduce that different levels of attention and inattention are present as possibilities in each aesthetically potent case. Distance functions “as a kind of mental insulation material necessary for a work of art if it is to be enjoyed aesthetically”. This kind of insulation seems quite the opposite to the theory of aesthetic engagement as immersion. The distance seems prone to become more of a boundary than insulation if not joined with strong artistic formalism. If one intends to coolly appropriate the artistic successes of a work, one might indeed need this kind of intellectualised, distanced stance.  

Another way to grasp aesthetic attitude has been through the traditional demand of disinterestedness, meaning here approaching an aesthetic object without “ulterior purpose”, this being a matter of motivation or intention. Here again, one could claim that motivation and intention direct attention

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386 Dickie 1964, 56.  
387 Dickie 1964, 57.  
388 Bullough’s “psychical distance” shares features with Brecht’s “distancing effect” (Verfremdungseffekt) (which might be more accurately translated as “unfamiliarizing” effect; with the meaning of “making unfamiliar”). Brecht approaches the theme from the point of view of the artist, performing arts, and as a tool to reveal imposed ideologies. This distancing effect, however, does not seem to directly affect the aesthetic experience. Even in Brecht’s plays it forms part of the overall aesthetic scheme instead of diverting from the aesthetic point of view or accentuating it. This is also the case Dickie seems to make when referring to Sheila Dawson’s example of the play version of *Peter Pan*. Katya Mandoki proposes “aesthetic swinging” instead of Dickie’s “attention” or Berleant’s “engagement” to describe the relation to the object of aesthetic experience. Mandoki 2007, 22.  
389 Dickie 1964, 57.  
390 Dickie 1964, 58.
differently depending on the purpose.

Instead, aesthetic experiences could be understood as messy bundles of different kinds of sentiments, of which that of aesthetic pleasure finally emerges as the nominating one, albeit not possibly the dominant emotion. It must be emphasised that even when most inconvenient at times, the contingency of aesthetic experience is an integral part of its fascination. There are notable discrepancies within experiences even as they take place. The fixed, focused attention is able to bridge these incoherencies for a somewhat coherent experience to form from the chaotic material, both internal and external, if such a separation can be distinguished. Dickie proposes attention in order to explain the special relation to the focus of aesthetic experience. This explanation, however, opens up many new questions regarding the nature of this relation. Whether understood as the process of general aestheticisation or change in the concept of the aesthetic, the widening process of the field of aesthetics changes the whole palette that the discussion over aesthetics has been concentrated on.

My main point is that the notions of attitude, disinterest, attention and the like already assume an anticipatory stance to aesthetic experience and can thus be labelled preparatory formulations pointing towards the preaesthetic. The steps leading to the experience have been emphasised in different ways. Similarity with the notion of preaesthetic comes from the focus on what precedes the aesthetic experience. But the preaesthetic contains already a nucleus of the aesthetic, whereas “attitude” or “attention” is considered more extraneous to the actual aesthetic taking place in the experience. As Dickie points out, “distraction is not a special kind of attention, it is a kind of inattention”. 391 This thus describes external conditions instead of those which lead directly to the aesthetic experience. This seems to be more a matter of approach: historically, the notion of aesthetic experience has been freed from the confines of art to measure up to the actual wide sphere of life situations where it takes place. This correlates to an extent with the concept of the aesthetic as freeing itself from the notion of beauty, then from that of art in a move towards the sphere of the everyday, and so on.

391 Dickie 1964, 58.
The aesthetic attitude could be considered instead to be a momentary aptitude or readiness to feel delight or to be moved aesthetically. This can be understood to be a state of openness or attunedness where most basic needs are fulfilled.\textsuperscript{392} The volatile or susceptible state of this kind of readiness can at times be very sensitive to changes within its sphere. I see no reason why this state could also contain elements of critical evaluation and so on, as Dickie, too, points out concerning the artificial distinction between the “general” aesthetic stance and critical apprehension. They are not mutually exclusive and thus not “inimical” as Dickie quotes Jerome Stolnitz as claiming.\textsuperscript{393} A sort of vigilance and propensity for aesthetic attention is of key importance here. It is precisely the (supposed) immediacy of the aesthetic moment that complicates the relation of aesthetic judgment and aesthetic experience.

These views on the analytical tradition concerning a certain aesthetic attitude or attention can be collected under the common denominator of an “aesthetic state of mind”.\textsuperscript{394} Bullough in his “Psychical Distance’ as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle” describes the psychological distance as that which, in certain situations, “appears to lie between our own self and its affections, using the latter term in its broadest sense as anything which affects our being”.\textsuperscript{395} Artistic production and appreciation are two such situations that seem to vary according to this notion of distance.

Experiences continue to develop after the initial taking place of the experience, the event that ignited it in the first place. They are continually moulded by memories until even the final faint trace of it disappears from memory or until it gets fixed into an icon of an experience, continually fostered by active remembering and retelling. These fixed experiences are the material of myths, great novels, and stories told to grandchildren. They are also sometimes the examples that aestheticians focus on when trying to formulate and fix the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cf. Maslow 1943.
\item Dickie 1964, 62.
\item Iseminger 2005, 100–101.
\item Bullough 1912, I.5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
elusive nature of an aesthetic experience as such. Whereas any experience can be aesthetically “tinged” or have some aesthetic attributes, aesthetic experiences tend to be those consisting of a “full immersion”, at least according to most traditional definitions.

The overall cogency of the notion of aesthetic attitude has been at stake, in my opinion, not because it is fundamentally implausible but because it manages to describe just one very particular setting for the anticipatory moment before an aesthetic experience. This very considerate, pure, even formalistic ideal for an experience does not, however, correspond to the challenges inherent in the enlarged notion of the sphere of the aesthetic experience. As far as everyday aesthetics is concerned, the variety of the scale of the experience has to be taken into account. No one type of experience can cover all of these different notions of the aesthetic. The same features can be involved, but different accentuations and a lot of variation between different elements should not be avoided. A multiplicity of experiences is truly to be embraced. The aesthetic in its multiple forms is strengthened by this variety.

On a shorter note, a parallel line of thought to the one presented here may be found already in Hume’s description of the two-tiered experience that describes the preparatory appropriation and its failure:

Some species of beauty, especially the natural kinds, on their first appearance command our affection and approbation; and where they fail of this effect, it is impossible for any reasoning to redress their influence, or adapt them better to our taste and sentiment.

This kind of “first appearance” or “antecedent operation” before the actual judgement is considered by Hume to be a matter of “the faculty of taste as an internal sense of beauty”. This is to say that reason together with perception leads to the perception of beauty. This is related to the ability to direct one’s

396 On “having an experience” compared to more muddled and general forms of experience, see Dewey 1980.
397 Hume 1912, Section I.
398 Ibid.
interest and, following from this, to direct also one’s attention. When dissecting the immediacy of aesthetic judgments, immediacy is revealed to be a construction of many consecutive or overlapping, predetermined or random factors or moments that contribute to the quality of aesthetic experiences.

**Aesthetic Alienation instead of Engagement?**

Yuriko Saito’s account of “difficult beauty” shows that even such a traditional aesthetic category as beauty can have more complex forms that affect how these forms are perceived.399 One of the central questions with difficult beauty and other types of awkward aesthetic experiences is whether aesthetic experiences are always essentially positive. The nucleus of the experience seems to be either positive and to contain an element of pleasure or to consist of a twist whereby some positive value is attached to negative experiential material.

Often a certain thrill is associated with aesthetic experience. This thrill, delight, or excitement is a somewhat stronger emotion than the pleasure usually associated with aesthetic experience. Being thrilled can derive from imminent feelings of something unexpected or challenging unfolding in one’s experience. It can also be cognitive in nature, coming from the sensation that “there is more than meets the eye”. This recognition can be based in a cognitive “reformation” of the information provided by the senses. Thus change can happen within the sphere of experience.

A spatial experience that leads to negative emotions or strong friction, rejection, or even opposition in someone is highly unlikely to lead to a positive aesthetic experience. Rejecting the aesthetic because of some other hindering experience is by no means permanent, but the effect can be a permanently muted experience. In everyday situations habit formation or modes of doing things can, for example, diminish the effect of “negative” spatial experience and the aesthetic gets space to grow again in or from the environment. It can thus

399 Saito mentions this specifically in relation to Kenkō’s aesthetics; Saito 2007, 188.
be possible to connect and engage again aesthetically after the initial negative effect. This forming of many different kinds of relations with the environment is crucial to the notion of aesthetic experience. Previously, before Berleant’s notion of engagement, aesthetic theory had described aesthetic experience in terms of distancing oneself in order to acquire a sufficiently objective perspective for enjoying an aesthetic yet cognitively emphasised experience. Attachment, sensory awareness, alertness, being in tune with the environment, the merging of object and subject in the experience are the cornerstones of aesthetic experience understood as engagement. Especially in environmental aesthetics this merging is of key importance.

The opposite of aesthetic engagement seems not to be only dis-engagement but alienation in a proper sense. It can be described as extrication or withdrawal from a situation that has most of the features traditionally linked to aesthetic engagement. Preaesthetic factors affect the experience so that it either leads to aesthetic engagement or, in drastic cases, to alienation. Aesthetic alienation can thus be understood to be a failure of an aesthetic situation to lead further into a forming of an aesthetic experience. This is a valuable tool in better understanding the practical consequences of such different kinds of practices as city planning, forest preservation, or art exhibition design, just to mention a few examples.

Morten Kyndrup shifts the focus from subjective or objective qualities or values to the “aesthetic relation”. Situating the aesthetic in terms of interrelation opens up the possibility of a shared point of view. As this aesthetic relation is crystallised:

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\text{In this sense, aesthetics describes the process that leads from the } I \text{ to the } We \text{ of a community that is not necessitated by a concept or a strict rationality, but by a kind of feeling that is as it were spontaneous in each and every one, or as Kyndrup suggests, a kind of “civilizing” process.}^{401}
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This update of many of the concepts regarding aesthetic experience seems inevitable at the moment, since much of the older discussion has become obsolete.

\[400\] Kyndrup 2008. For a review and summary in English, see Wallenstein 2010.
\[401\] Wallenstein 2010, 121.
or inadequate after the expansion of the scope of aesthetics. As with the case of art, the aesthetic relation is necessarily something very different when considered as the aesthetic relation to everyday objects, for example.402

The aesthetic potentiality of environments has been in the focus of environmental aesthetics but aesthetically potent situations have not been given similar attention. With the rise of everyday aesthetics the notion of “the aesthetic situation” provides us with an important insight into how aesthetic experiences manifest themselves in everyday situations. Different notions concerning atmosphere form part of this discussion, but they tend to be too ethereal and do not manage to grasp the concreteness and especially the temporal and spatial aspects of given potentially aesthetic moments in everyday life. The affinity with certain situations and the avoidance of others is not simply a question of individual preferences, but instead, I believe, is conditioned by environmental, spatial, or otherwise complex and indefinable factors in the given situation. Their effect has a larger role than what has been conventionally believed within the field of aesthetics.

The notion of alienation shares some important similarities with what Berleant calls “negative aesthetics”, defined as “sensory experience that has no clear positive value”403 or as aesthetic experience that is “perceptually distressing, repellent, painful, or has effects that are harmful or destructive”.404 In other words, this alienation does not necessarily refer to simply the negative outcome of an aesthetic experience, but also the unactualised potentialities in aesthetically potent situations. Spatial experiences thus generate either positive or negative aesthetic experiences or actively alienate the aesthetic dimension altogether. Berleant calls for an acknowledgement of the aesthetically negative in order to unmask the “vague discomfiture” often accompanying aesthetic experiences.405 Triggering this discomfiture can also help making it explicit and thus one is able to respond to it, make use of it, or try to change the components leading to negativity.

403 Berleant 2011, 75.
404 Berleant 2011, 79.
405 Berleant 2011, 80.
The components of an aesthetic experience can be “picked up” or revived later, after getting accustomed to the spatial conditions or when these conditions have changed to an altogether new setting. Also the otherwise positive possibility of aesthetic intimacy can in some situations lead to a negative kind of intimacy when something habitually experienced becomes too close in negative terms.

To better describe this lapse, delay, or even suppression of the aesthetic experience the general Aristotelian notions of potentiality and actuality are of use. In order for this aesthetic potential to be actualised, some changes need to take place either in the experiencer or in the conditions. The subject and object can also be seen as situated in a continuous stream of experience, flowing back and forth in different entities in an environment. The aesthetic in a wide range of situations is seen here as a potential that can be actualised under certain circumstances or when the prerequisites act favourably towards an aesthetic mode of experiencing. Of these prerequisites I consider the spatial experience to be one of the most important ones. Yet, because of its obviousness, its effects are very often underestimated. Everyday environments are good examples in this sense, since in them the same elements are present most of the time. Yet the way they are viewed changes according to multiple variables.

Berleant actually emphasises this reliance on spatial conditions explicitly when he describes overcrowding as “aesthetically as well as physically damaging”. According to Berleant, this “spatial pollution” takes various forms, such as overcrowding in vehicles, in classrooms, in auditoria, in public spaces of all kinds. It can result from dense construction: private houses packed so tightly that they have inadequate outside private space, residential apartment districts that compress people in both inside and outside spaces, impeding movements, even constricting breathing. Space pollution can take a vertical dimension, as in apartment buildings so high that people can be trapped in the upper floors by insufficient or inoperative elevators and stairways too long to descend in an emergency. Such

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conditions produce bodily experience that is oppressive and claustrophobic, as well as physically exhausting.\footnote{Berleant 2011, 82.}

He assumes, however, that the experience of overcrowding is already an aesthetic one. In contrast, I believe that overcrowding should be understood first and foremost as a spatial phenomenon that encourages or inhibits conditions for the aesthetic to actualise. The aesthetic can thus take form in human interaction, in the experience of architecture (as differentiated from spatial experience), “conventional” art experience, in the everyday, and so on. In short, as that which “fills” the space or takes place within it.

These kinds of spatial oppressive features of the environment are morally questionable as well, at least when they are “perpetrated knowingly, designedly, and deliberately”.\footnote{Ibid.} They have the power to lead to “aesthetic deprivation”. It differs however from the alienation I am trying to describe here, since deprivation denotes the dulling of the sensory, something that happens as a result of a long and insidious exposure to the eroding effect of the harmfully negative in the aesthetic. This can lead to more permanent stages of aesthetic damage or harm.\footnote{Ibid.}

Aesthetic alienation, in turn, can be quite sudden but it can also be temporary.

This approach to the prerequisites of aesthetic engagement takes into account the aesthetic elements of human interaction, different kinds of everyday activities, as well as cultural practices. That is, other phenomena besides those traditionally considered the focus of aesthetic attention.\footnote{Cf. the quest for “further expansion of environmental aesthetics” pronounced by Saito and Berleant’s proposal for social aesthetics. Cf. Saito 2010; Berleant 1999; Berleant 2005.} The notion of a prerequisite fits well the description of aesthetic engagement that “emphasizes the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic appreciation”.\footnote{Berleant 2013.} This “holism” includes many “outside” factors besides the kernel of experience. The core of experience can be understood here either via its contextual meaning (relating for example to the arenas of the aforementioned institutionalised aesthetic experiences) or the essentialist meaning it implies. The functions of a subject and an object are a
blurred opposition according to Berleant’s account, but at least some elements of them also temporally and causally precede the experience. The constituents of an experience, so to speak, are being gathered even before the actual experience takes place. Cultural, social, cognitive, linguistic, and sensory components, just to name a few, all come together in the actual formation of an aesthetic experience as engagement.

Saito emphasises that everyday aesthetics is particular in the sense that it often leads directly to action.\textsuperscript{412} This action-orientedness of everyday aesthetics underlines the situational character of the experience. All the elements involved in a situation, such as atmosphere, surroundings, and temporal as well as spatial frame gain even more importance as the parts of everyday aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic pleasure is thus described as activity- and context-focused pleasure instead of being, for example, drive-actuated or end-directed.\textsuperscript{413} This shows the way towards explaining the relation between aesthetic pleasure and physical pleasure. Honing the skills of perception by repetition can be deemed central in this sense.

The everyday life is full of situations where the aesthetic is either embraced or rejected, mostly unknowingly but sometimes decidedly. As I have emphasised earlier, psychological explanations for this process are simply not accurate enough, since in order to comprehensively understand the reasons behind certain decisions and behaviours one needs to plunge deeper into the values, relations, and thought processes of an individual created in the larger cultural and social context. The concepts of engagement and disengagement or even alienation are especially apt for describing the connection with the environment and its aesthetic features.

Multiple spatial stressors (or “pollution” as Berleant calls it) in the physical environment cause reactions varying from a minor nuisance to full-blown terror, and these reactions define to what extent the emotive, aesthetic capacity is functioning, so to speak. Possibly this could yield even to a new, fresh assessment of the notion of disinterestedness, as in the mind being receptive enough for

\textsuperscript{412} Saito 2007, 4.
\textsuperscript{413} See Matthen 2014.
the aesthetic to be able to take place. A sufficiently absorbing state of mind
would be required at the right moment. This does not refer to disinterestedness
in the sense of being in possession of a pure and distanced stance that can be
adopted by a decision of the free will. Following this thought, it would even
be possible to consider disinterestedness as the force to resist the inevitable
disturbances, nuisances, and interruptions especially present in the realm of
everyday aesthetics.
VI Spatiality in Everyday Environments

This final chapter is dedicated to approaching the previously presented ideas from a more practical perspective. By illustrating with selected examples and thus better describing the relation between spatial and aesthetic experience I hope to show a direction for possible future applications in which theory meets practice. The emphasis is obviously on spatial experience and how it develops towards an aesthetic experience. The intermingling of different qualities often makes it difficult to discern experientially between the spatial and the aesthetic. However, by focusing on the spatial qualities of concrete examples I intend to direct the attention to this particular prerequisite of aesthetic experiences.

Descriptions of how something is experienced, for example, can be very helpful in filling in the more theoretical approach to spatio-aesthetic experiences. Through these descriptions one can move towards a new understanding of space as a source or a field for a preaesthetic experience and further to an aesthetic experience. Instead of turning to literary examples here, I shall mainly use my own experiences as a starting point. One reason for this is that I know and can trust to know what is familiar to me; the “everydayness” of my everyday is not unclear or questionable in the sense that it could be if relying only on literary examples. The presented cases are mainly positive in the sense that the spatial element seems capable of supporting the aesthetic and actively leading towards it. By presenting successful cases I hope to show some future directions for
recognising and producing high quality experiences both in the sphere of the everyday as well as that of art. In this sense I see my project as a normative one, its relevance residing in helping to recognise the potentiality and diversity of aesthetic characteristics in different environments and assisting in improving the skills necessary to fully take advantage of these qualities – the ultimate goal being an enhancement of the quality of life by the means of boosting aesthetic well-being.

My examples concern the so-called “everyday spaces”. My aim has been to open the discussion to include spaces other than those that are usually understood by the notion of “everyday environments” in architectural theory and practice. The rapidly ongoing urbanisation process is partly the reason why the definition calls for redefining to some extent, since some buildings previously studied for their monumental quality have also proven to be important factors in the everyday life of city dwellers. This definition of everyday environments, with its new proposed tones, points towards both the public as well as the private spheres of everyday life, also comprehending all the nuances between these two spheres traditionally treated as opposing extremes.

In the scope of my study it is possible only to tentatively open up this discussion and lead it towards the direction of understanding spatial experiences and the way they affect the aesthetic sphere of the everyday. Reconciliation between these two spheres is possible since the dialogue is by no means non-existent, and because besides the cross-disciplinary approach also an approach crossing different practices is needed in order to understand the complexity of spatio-aesthetic experiences. Examining the gained knowledge can help in assessing and calibrating the properties of everyday spaces and reorienting the skills associated with not only experiencing, but also managing them.

Everyday spaces obviously only form a part of human environments. Many differences in lifestyles and sets of habits define what each person’s everyday spaces are. However, there are spaces in cities that are more clearly definable as everyday spaces by their planned and intentional uses. These kinds of spaces are dependent on how the everyday is structured in this particular historically determined point in time and are susceptible to change when, for example,
technological trends change the sphere of the everyday in a more or less radical way. Large railway stations are a mundane even if usually a spatially prominent example of this. They originate as a building style from the 19th century when they were considered to be emblematic of the new dimensions of mobility and travel. Only a few decades ago, they were considered obsolete and even soon-to-be abandoned as cars and air travel were considered the central modes of future transport. Now they are hailed as important spaces once again as their use rate in big cities is increasing.

My intention is to describe spatial design not as an art form, but as something designed to be capable of creating an experiential sphere that is related and takes an active stance towards the sphere of non-built space. This is best seen in how “functional spaces” of the everyday are perceived and experienced and, eventually as a result of this, what kind of values, expectations, and inherent possibilities are attached to them. Some more recent ways of thinking about collectivity and living especially in densely-inhabited urban areas more flexibly integrate the public into the private and vice versa, and support the idea of these intertwining in everyday spaces. It is fruitful for my purposes to study how space is used on these occasions and how its use can be developed in ways that either hinder or promote positive spatial experiences that contribute to aesthetic experiences.

The spaces where everyday actions mostly take place can at first seem a very mundane context for assessing the effect that spatiality has on the aesthetic factors of experience. Everyday experiences consist of mental states that are not fully explicit, understood, or even deemed worthy of introspection, let alone of philosophical interest. They are considered inevitable simply because of their familiarity, or for practical reasons such as that there might not be any other choice than to endure the phenomena that are the causes behind these states.

Such a phenomenon as commuting, for example, often comprises an exhausting number of compromises made in order to get from geographical point A to point B. How this happens is a mixture between individual and collective choices made inside strictly prescribed limits set by timetables, schedules, and physical obstacles. The spaces directly associated with commuting are typically not primarily intended to be aesthetically relevant as such; their practicality and
technical properties are their most defining qualities. For example, the train carriage is a compromise between a set of requirements subordinate to technical solutions and design that aims at functionality and cost-efficiency. Comfort and splendid views are thus somewhat secondary elements, rarely the first thing to be aimed at as more practical and economic purposes guide the design principles. The same is also true with other, immobile, and more commonly used everyday spaces. They become familiar to us by necessity more often than by choice. However, this familiarity is also peculiarly a source of some of the aesthetic lustre they might acquire in our eyes over time.

Everyday actions are subordinate to choices and decisions that reflect the values of an individual. The recursive rhythms of the everyday that take place are subordinate to other rhythms as diverse as timetables, schedules, calendar markings, opening hours, changing seasons, times of the day, and the biological rhythms of the body. With too many elements changing continuously, the everyday would become stressful, overwhelming, and unexpected in a highly debilitating way. This can be seen in some chaotic big cities where the infrastructure does not allow anything but very approximate planning. The everyday goes on to a certain extent on a loop, and everyday spaces are an important factor in providing the setting for this necessary repetitive familiarity. Whether these spaces actively support the aesthetic in the everyday or whether it is suppressed is, however, one of the central questions in the field of everyday aesthetics.

We usually have some kind of a goal or a purpose, or multiple ones at the same time, in our everyday lives. At least for me not having some deeds to be fulfilled would be impossible at this particular phase of my life, and I can perhaps reach closest to that on holiday. Holiday does not count as the everyday, this much seems clear even for the most fervent critics of the notion of the everyday. Inserting a more action-oriented perspective on everyday aesthetics also requires considering the motives and goals necessarily attached to the individual ideas of the everyday.

With a continuous introspection and feedback from different features and actors in the everyday life, we modify our actions in order to make the everyday experience either easier or more pleasurable, or both. Among others, these
criteria might include aiming to be more productive or saving time for some other purpose. Aligning one’s route and pace with those of others on the street, for example, requires both an act of assessment and an execution based on this assessment. The distance to others is affected by multiple factors. Reciprocity in this behaviour relies to some extent on cultural norms and the continual friction in questioning, renewing, and reimposing them.

Everyday moments, like avoiding a collision on the sidewalk, are both fleeting and recurring. Trajectories and routes are affected by any number of variables, the severity of these ranging from those which go unnoticed to those which can potentially even be fatal. Both internal and external factors affect the everyday, and one’s environment has a strong influence on the internal factors. The arbitrariness of these processes might seem overwhelming, but instead some patterns in spatial design can help to render the processes into more intelligible evidence of the experiences imminent in the everyday.

Home as an Epitome of Everyday Space

As the saying goes, “there’s no place like home”. Neither is there a space like home, in the sense of the privacy it offers and how it can be moulded and personalised into reflecting our inner selves. The distinctly Western notion of home is prominent here. To a large extent it is defined by the notion of privacy. It is a common, even if a very recent, trend for each member of a family to have a room of his or her own. By this and other subtle spatial solutions in Western contemporary homes it is made clear that everyone is expected and allowed to have a distinct amount of space just for him or herself.

This is not the right context for an extensive spatial analysis of domestic buildings, but for briefly pointing out how home offers the basic and most intimate experience of an everyday space. Enlarging this notion to cover a wider area deemed an everyday environment is thus motivated as it relates to an extent to similar experiences that take place when at home. Home is also the central space in the everyday, so in order to take into consideration the everyday
environment as a whole, home is the obvious epicentre and from the experiences it entails, other experiential strands in the everyday start to unfold as the sphere of the everyday expands outwards.

On a smaller scale, the recent versions of the nomadic way of life have made it possible to focus on objects in the sense that they are given the capacity of “building a home” around them. This is based on the fact that smaller representations of home can be taken along with us even to distant places. They do not need a specific place or always the same environment in order to create a sense of permanence and an aura of stability somehow attached to them. Wanderlust as the urge to travel is not a recent phenomenon as such, but the globalisation of cultures and the relative ease of travel have increased the sense of “living at large” in the world. This fluid spatiality on a grand scale necessarily has consequences that can be understood as a less attached relation to everyday spaces in the traditional sense.

As an occasional extension, hotel rooms, tents, or camper vans, for example, can serve as replacements for home. Intruders in these space, such as the hotel cleaner who comes into the room unexpectedly, can be felt as a greater disturbance than if, for example, it would happen in an office cubicle or other space that does not have the acquired status of being representational of home. As an enclosure, a room is usually a smaller and more easily definable entity than a home in its entirety. The built space of a room has as its concrete, physical boundaries walls, a ceiling, and a floor. In many ways, it repeats the structures and directions found outside the room, in unbound rural or urban space.

Analysing and even describing one’s own habitat can be difficult, partly because it is a product of ingrained habits that one is not aware of having in the first place, as aptly described by Andrew Ballantyne:

   My habits are more-or-less invisible to me. They sink beneath the threshold of consciousness, and are enacted without being the focus of thought, though others might notice them – especially when their habits are different from mine.

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414 For the spatiality of the hotel as “unhomely home”, see Vidler 1992 & Paterson 2004.
Or as Arto Haapala describes it:

Home is a place where everything is familiar. Home is something where most of the matters are under control. If not anywhere else, at least at home we have a say as to what it should be like, how it should be organized, etc. We create our homes and know them thoroughly.417

Ingrained habits are related to inhabiting. Behaviour leads to habitat formation, thus directing the form and contents that habits take. One way to characterise a habit is through its enduring quality; this emphasises stability, continuity, and even rigidity. Aron Vinegar writing on habit reminds us that it refers also to the past to the extent that it is present “as an active immanence” or “sedimentation of history” in the body. That is to say, as it affects present actions.418 Habits are also in direct relation to manners, as they direct the more concrete ways of doing things and responding to social as well as other situations and external stimuli in a cultured way. By any definition, it is of central relevance to consider in what way habits evoke the past in the present. Depending on this, habit can be either restricting or liberating. It can be a way of reinforcing the old, or of providing assistance for the new to emerge.

The stability of habits is ascertained by continuous adjustment. Habit thus requires a certain level of attentiveness in keeping up with its “maintenance”.419 Conscious habit building with the purpose of making one’s life better is one way of seeing habits as both purposeful and malleable. This is an intrinsically positive way of assessing habits as consciously maintained tools in directing life.

It is worth asking how these habits relate to the home as a spatially experiential entity. In a sense, by relying on habits, the register of experiences is being cut from its extreme ends. The familiar becomes the average also regarding the aesthetic factors in the everyday. One gets accustomed to the specific and differentiating qualities of one’s own home. The spatial qualities of one’s home, the dimensions of different rooms, the impenetrability of the walls, every nook and corner that

418 Vinegar 2014, 260.
419 Ibid.
is present but never spent time in, become fixed and incorporated into the normality of the experience. One does not recognise anymore even if something is wrong within the parameters of one’s own familiarity.

But do we actually know our home thoroughly? Homes are filled with objects that we have not chosen, that were given to us as gifts or inheritance. Everything is not under control. Water can start flooding from the kitchen sink, or the neighbour can bang on the wall without us having any say in the matter. Home is the most shelter-like place we have, but it is not synonymous with safety or even total privacy. Eventually, it cannot give any guarantees of this, and so expecting it to be fully familiar and in our control belongs to the sphere of the functionally necessary deceptions of the everyday.

Home can be a place where we feel a certain placid contentment, where our own rituals are repeated in privacy, and where we can recharge our minds and bodies in relative peace. However, there are always also cracks in the everyday that keep us on our toes. Home becomes an important place to us, but it is nonetheless also always a space, with unknown borders and limits that reveal themselves only through some of the actions which take place within it. This uncanny double nature of home is related to the fact that it is also the most likely place to get injured or assaulted.

One can compare a sense of feeling at home to occupying a fitting room in a shop, which to a certain degree emulates the feeling of home-like privacy and safety even though it represents a very temporary visiting space. In a home or in an office space small personal things can often make them feel familiar and special. The privacy of the home environment, of that which takes place intra muros, becomes contrasted in decreasing phases with the space outside the walls.

The felt and experienced quality of an apartment space is very different than what can be interpreted from the aestheticised photographs taken for selling purposes, for example. This is partly because photographs do not convey many of the sensory aspects such as smells as the residual mementos of the inhabitants, or the haptic feel of different surfaces. But also only when concretely present

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420 Nor do the photographic reproductions with their various optical, mechanical, and electrical distortions and limitations particularly faithfully match the image conveyed by human eyes.
in a given space one can fully see the possibilities it offers for organising a life, the ways for bodies and objects to inhabit and fill it. The prospect of different points of views, of being able to turn around, the complementing glimpses of peripheral vision and casually glancing through objects alternating with more precise attention to things of interest are possible when getting to know a home. The aestheticised versions of a life lived in a space does not get in the way or at least does not totally hinder the indispensable aspects of living.

Spatially, the interiority and special character of home is perceived by default as a mixture of different sensory inputs. As Isis Brook describes this experience:

> [T]he tangibility of space and the sense that particular interior spaces have a character of which their interiority is a crucial aspect is brought into focus by placing attention on the sounds, smells, tastes and kinaesthetic responses that arise from experiencing them. This has a striking impact on the experience of space since it becomes thickened and as potentially meaningful as the objects it was previously seen as separating.421

Home as a meaningful and aesthetically potent space becomes experienced in its totality, through its “interiority” as well as in conjunction with the objects it houses. Lives leave their marks by the choice of objects and on their surfaces and the places in which they are kept. The paths of lives are shown in patterns of organisation and the rhythm of placing objects in relation to each other. The experience is altogether different again when a home is properly appropriated “in use”, when one gets to glimpse it inhabited by its inhabitants, on the rare occasions when they act as they normally would by themselves in the environment where they feel most secure.

Access to apartments or homes is provided by spaces worthy of attention as such. Gateways, stairways, corridors, hallways, closets, and other imaginable spaces with minor roles that serve the actual purposes of the building, are to be found in close proximity to the most intimate spaces of a home. Functional or auxiliary spaces like these in buildings are not that well mapped and the phases of their formation have not been thoroughly archived. Within architectural practice

421 Brook 2002, 74.
these are called “support spaces”, “subsidiary spaces”, or “service spaces”, each term pointing to the fact and requirement of them being flexible and supporting the primary functions of the building.422 For example, a pantry supports the kitchen, and dressing rooms, walk-in-closets, and home spas are adjacent to bedrooms in the most abundantly spacious contemporary homes. In warmer climates some of the support spaces are placed outside and are thus not air-conditioned. In these cases the experiential difference between the actual living spaces is marked by a stark and energy-saving contrast of the microclimate.

When moving on from the secure space of home the environment opens up in time as well as space. The different set of possibilities offered by a familiar environment is often surprisingly unclear to the inhabitants, who have their own accustomed ways of inhabiting not only their homes, but also their streets, quarters, neighbourhoods, and cities.

**Urban Everyday Spaces**

What is of interest here are the “*experiences of the city – the sensations that arise from a personally and subjectively lived urban place*”423 – especially insofar as these experiences show how by being spatially affected they are converted into aesthetic experiences. The notion of the everyday is central here, since it is the city as the arena for everyday life, not the city as it unfolds for the tourist, for example, that is mostly relevant for the scope of this study. Distinguishing between the curiosity of the “tourist gaze”424 and the aesthetic experiences embedded in everyday spatiality helps in distinguishing the role of architecture as an art form and, on the other hand, built environments as they are lived in.425 The latter is under scrutiny here, as I aim at instilling a perspective of spatial experience as

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422 Louis Kahn draws a similar distinction between “served” and “servant” spaces, e.g. as used in the Richards Medical Center (1965) of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.
423 Ameel 2013, 48. For “urban identity”, see Haapala 2003. For an interdisciplinary approach to studying senses in the urban environment, see also Diaconu, Heuberger, Mateus-Berr & Vosicky 2011.
424 See Urry 2011.
a prerequisite for aesthetic experiences of everyday spaces. These spaces mostly concern the urban environment since it interests me as the stage where most human life is concentrated at the moment. Dense urban environments provide spaces where both the benefits and tensions of living close to others, for example, most easily materialise.

Architecture as a concept in this context connotes almost too heavily with technical solutions, buildings as separate entities, and the planning and construction of spaces as receptacles. The actual experience of space, of having a certain constellation of a room in which to function, does not seem to be describable simply by means of architecturally established concepts. What is usually described as architectural harmony, for example, might not be directly commensurable with the experience of a particular space. This is not merely the result of an occasional antagonism between theory and practice, but also of the many nuances and independent factors affecting the spatial experience. It is thus towards the direction of understanding the practice and theory of architecture as “the creation of the built environment” that it is advisable to move when following the purposes of this study.426

The technically driven and also art-oriented design perspective of architecture aims at an aesthetic impact with a very high emphasis on the practical and functional. Spatial experience on an individual’s level concerns in turn also the usability, adaptability, and flexibility of built spaces. Architecture as such can of course, and often does, support this kind of experience, but it is by no means synonymous with it. This is also why even the more aesthetically inclined study of architecture is not enough but a wide array of complementary perspectives on built spaces, spatial formations, ideals behind planning practices, and understanding of the sensory and experiential sphere are needed.

In the larger context of human environments, Allen Carlson has criticised the “designer landscape approach” and integrated the study of these environments to the extended sphere of understanding everyday life. This view emphasises the functionality of different features of environments.427 In my view this relation of

the environment and the everyday becomes manifested in actions, habits, and social relations. Here of interest is the spatial manifestation of this relation to the extent it is present as an aesthetic prerequisite of those factors that mould the everyday. How is this “functional fit” regarding the spatial features of the environment exactly experienced? Once again, negative experiences exemplify in an apt way the relation between the functions of an environmental feature and how it affects the experiential sphere. This is reflected all the way to the level of acquiring satisfying and pleasure-inducing aesthetic experiences. In this context, Carlson notes also that the aesthetics of buildings is not the same as the aesthetics of architecture.428

As Gernot Böhme puts it: “Talking about architecture seems an even more troubled practice, at least when architecture is treated as art.”429 As a solution to this problem, Andrew Ballantyne proposes analysing buildings conceptually as “tools” instead of “artworks”. This notion emphasises their functionality and this kind of “pragmatic aesthetics of architecture” is juxtaposed by the more traditional contemplative aesthetics of architecture.430 By this is sealed also more explicitly the belonging of these buildings and larger aesthetic entities they represent to the sphere of everyday life.

Functional spaces are formed most often by, and in the context of, functional buildings. The concept is not necessarily used to describe the functionality of in-between-spaces as such. In urban areas, for example, recent planning has taken more and more into consideration these slightly forgotten areas and they have been turned into pocket parks, playgrounds, and so on. These kinds of reconsid-erations effectively take hold of the functional potentiality of in-between-spaces. Also in this manner, one can follow “the unselfconscious habits of life being reified into spatial configurations, items of furniture, and enclosed volumes of building.”431 One has to take into consideration also the space outside and between buildings, the unintentional and temporary spatial formations inside

428 Carlson 2001, 10.
430 Ballantyne 2011, 43.
431 Ballantyne 2011, 45.
and in the surroundings. Even though everything is not captured by design and planning, experiences are often strongly affected by these “accidental spaces”.

The notion of functional beauty developed by Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson underlines the possibility of aesthetically appreciating different kinds of entities for other qualities besides their surface that has traditionally been considered the focus of aesthetic appreciation. This encompasses living organisms as well as intentional, built human environments. It means that aesthetically appreciating a building has sometimes been hastily interpreted only to concern its surface qualities. Instead, aesthetic appreciation takes (or at least ought to take) into account also the “hidden aspects” of buildings such as “their structural soundness, their commodiousness, their conduciveness to the health and productivity of their occupants, their function, and so forth”.

Understanding architecture as something that envelops the empty space with different kinds of forms and shapes gets closer to helping us understand the experience of space especially in the case of built spaces. But if by this it simply refers to the outer crust it provides to space, the volumes and possibilities of action that spatial design provides are not thoroughly probed. In order to understand the difference, one can, for example, ask to what extent a home or an office can be compared with the spatial experience evoked by a gothic cathedral.

It might seem somewhat paradoxical at first, but considering architecture mainly as an art form does not take the aesthetic aspects of spatial experience into consideration to the extent they should be apprehended. Even defining the aesthetic in this context without resorting to older definitions of art is challenging enough. The experiential hybrid forms which characterize built spaces are part of a more complex phenomenon that can be described by the notion of art. The architecture as art versus non-art discussion is too complicated and multi-faceted to be involved here but is merely brought up in order to emphasise other non-art oriented or -originated possibilities in assessing built everyday spaces. This is emphasised as part and parcel of trying to reassess the ingrained boundaries for understanding spatial experience. Traditionally, these have been understood

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either within the context of art (traditional architecture theory, museum and
gallery spaces), religion (cathedrals and other imposing sacred spaces of devo-
tion), and power represented as politics or economic power (city space, public
space, architecture as a manifestation of power). When it comes to organically
built social relations, the need to congregate and to organise this need spatially
characterises human communities. The home environment as a particularly
defined area has largely been a non-issue until the notion of “habitation” became
more prominent and the everyday started to gain interest as a worthy subject
for a more systematic study.

Space can be experienced as dense or loose, depending on how objects or
people are situated in it. This flexibility of arrangement provides an opportunity
for change in the appearance of space and the effects it has on people. The tacit
practices of the everyday reflect this experience. Aesthetic principles in organising
one’s everyday life are everywhere to be seen. Aesthetically engaging moments
are not only those that lift above the everyday but also those that are grounded
into its very familiar and repetitive patterns. Flexible situation-bound everyday
spaces sculpt an environment inside surroundings that reflect the practices that
take place within it.

The ritualisation of some spatial practices is an inevitable development for
the many socially encoded phenomena which take place. These rituals and
habits vary culturally. For example, many different and even comically tinged
local features regulate practices such as queuing. The Finns queue in neat lines
and keep a strict distance to the next person in line, whereas in China a queue
is more like an active group formation where everyone tries to get ahead. The
experiential point of view relies directly on these features in all their peculiarity.
In a way, space positions the experiences to predetermined settings to some
extent, but provides a fair amount of freedom to act inside these settings. Some
of the almost infinite number of possibilities are then actualised, and these
precede the actual spatial decisions. Until a wall is erected, a path is trodden,

433 See Augé 1995.
434 E.g. by Le Corbusier, Lefebvre & Certeau.
435 See Frank & Stevens 2006; Ameel & Tani 2012; Tani 2014.
or a bridge has united two separate spaces, these possibilities are open yet not fully assessed in their multiplicity.

The elements in human environments are specifically designed at least to a certain extent to be characterised mostly by their functionality. In a sense, they represent “paradigms of functional items”. This practical functionality of everyday spaces creates comfort and trust in their users. The aesthetic aspects of these kinds of spaces reveal themselves in the continuum of time passing, by the habits that form around them and by the activities that mark these spaces as places, remembered at least for a short amount of time for the special nature they have acquired. “In order to understand the relation that we have with buildings, we need to take note of the way habits are formed, and how they become part of who we are.” But this does not apply only to buildings but to everyday spaces as consisting also of the space between them, the unplanned and compromised spatial formations, and the space that is created by action inside these planned as well as unplanned spaces.

Distance can be understood also as “farness”, consisting of physical length. Distance is here seen as something that allows movements, the prospect of an open field with the possibility of movement or any kind of development. This is echoed in the notion of the “human urge to expansion”. This kind of territorial thinking might evoke unpleasant historical connotations, yet it might also refer nowadays to civilised ways of expansion offered by technology. By means of the Internet, virtual realities and so on, one is not bound only to an actual physical space anymore. The implied differences, relation, and need for distance, expansion, and breadth can be seen to materialise in the concept of movable nomad spaces. This is linked to perceiving the space of action as purposeful or comprehensible space. In a sense, human space is essentially linked to the action that takes place in it. This action is a necessity, since it basically forms the basis for experience on a spatio-temporal level.

436 Parsons & Carlson 2008, 137.
437 Ballantyne 2011, 43.
438 Bollnow 2011, 87.
In urban space, power relations are on display and implicitly direct the experience. Hannah Arendt’s notion of vita activa is illustrative in this sense in the manifestations it acquires in the shared city space. As its opposite, vita contemplativa, more or less understood to comprise the private sphere, is less visible in the public space yet it exists in traces.\textsuperscript{440} Public and private realms are both thus represented in the city space albeit in very different ways and, as it seems logical, in different amounts.

Temporary solutions can form a buffer between some harsher or incompatible structures and people living among them in urban areas. An increasing population density that almost literally pushes the production of space in both cities and personal everyday spaces is also a challenge for interdisciplinary research. From the humanistic point of view, striving to understand the dynamics at work when people choose to live close together reveals a cluster of manifold issues. The most severe cases include such things as gender-biased sanitation problems in developing countries, or social caste conventions that rely heavily on spatial discrimination. These phenomena are out of the scope of this study but worth mentioning as they represent very grave problems that have to be tackled through their spatial aspects.

The limits in understanding and assessing other person’s spatial circumstances and experiences are evident. To a certain extent, everyone is insulated within his or her own fields of experience. Acquiring new skills and habits, a sort of determinate “acclimatisation” to new modes of dwelling on the earth seems necessary for the time being as the human population continues to grow. Trying to understand and improve the experiences taking place on an individual level does not seem to be supported by the planning processes even though most recent design practices are finally questioning this. Even gradual changes in the environment can enhance their aesthetic quality.\textsuperscript{441} The role of green areas and urban nature and how they are curated and integrated into the urban tissue are

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{440} See Arendt 2013.
\textsuperscript{441} Planning professionals such as Jane Jacobs, Kevin A. Lynch and Jan Gehl have famously shown sensitivity to humanistic aspects of city planning. Cf. Gehl 2001, Lynch 1960; this applies also to the principles of the New Urbanism movement to some extent.
\end{footnotesize}
an example of this. Urban aesthetics in this sense is defined as continual assessing, compromising, and rerouting when it comes to spatial choices, in either design or the everyday use of this design.

It has to be emphasised that good quality spatial experiences that have the potentiality to lead to aesthetic experiences do not necessarily require the controlling of space. Positive experiences can result from letting oneself follow the unusual and unexpected cues in an environment. This kind of meandering happens all the time in the sphere of everyday activities, where assessing the best routes to proceed and other practical criteria for functioning has become almost automatic with its own set of combined randomness and inner logic. This automated activity does not hinder aesthetic potentiality as such, but what may not support the aesthetic aspects of this experience is often found to be the environment itself.

Everyday spaces become lived or experienced space only through the actions and experiences in them. From bus stops and supermarket aisles to waiting halls and exit corridors and even to the peaceful certainty of the space inside the walls of one’s own home, the sphere of action is formed by a certain set of expectations and predictions of the nature of these spaces and the scope of action they make possible. One can illustrate the role of predictions through the multiverse or meta-universe hypothesis, according to which an infinite number of parallel universes exists. Each everyday choice, action and event opens up an infinite set of new possibilities and these in turn have their infinite number of possible repercussions, and so on. These individually defined predictions are the basis of our survival in everyday life. This pertains also to the functioning of objects in these spaces, how they are by design usable in an expected and foreseeable way. How spaces are joined to each other, corridors, doorways, stairs, and doorsteps all function on the basis of a certain set of expectations. In the midst of everyday actions there is not much time for contemplation, but these actions entail a set of ways to act that are almost automatic. The means to change one’s behaviour inside these predetermined settings can be surprisingly limited.

There will always be a certain ambivalence or contradiction of strong feelings associated with the social sphere. It is far from being merely harmonious to
share space or actions, intentions, and hopes that are situated and associated with them. In multiple everyday situations frustration is merged with the joy of sharing. In situations such as fitting into a crowded bus or searching for a table in a lunch restaurant one might hope that there were less people interested in going in the same direction or having the same preferences on the lunch menu.

One might wish for more space to make the choice according to some very basic aesthetic preferences, for example sitting by the window in the bus, in order to enjoy the view outside, or avoiding a certain table in a restaurant because the noise from the kitchen makes conversation difficult and eating a stressful experience. When able to make these choices, by these preferences one is actively molding the experience of the environmental conditions into a direction that actively supports one's well-being. Or at least what one is used or taught to believe would support it. On the other hand, in a familiar lunch place, one might be surprised to notice that a corner table in the left is actually a very pleasant one to sit since it catches all the mouthwatering smells from the kitchen. One would not have made the choice to sit there unless other tables had already been taken. Knowledge about one’s personal well-being might thus also be biased; habit and familiarity in situations do not necessarily lead towards increased well-being but instead suppress the changes that might actually be beneficial. The subtle and sometimes even more abrupt changes in the tissue of everyday experiences can force one into situations that then become the “new norm” for well-being. This “nudging” out of one’s comfort zone is taking place all the time and not just in matters concerning aesthetic preferences even though they are mostly in the centre of attention here.

The process of becoming rooted to your environment or when something in it specifically grows on you requires a certain timeframe to happen. Stability is needed for a sense of well-being to develop even from an environment that otherwise supports individual well-being. However, striking the right balance between stability and constructive change is crucial. Especially when it comes to different kinds of aesthetic experiences and the different layers of well-being they promote, some are made possible by their familiarity whereas other types of experiences flourish out of new encounters and possibilities. Uncertainty is not
pleasurable but some adversity in relation to the environing conditions might even be profitable for sustaining aesthetic experiences.\footnote{Arendt 1978.} An innate element of surprise, pleasurable or more of a shock-variety, depending on different factors, characterises the experience of the unknown in urban environments.\footnote{Haapala 2003, 17.} Yet it seems that some amount of friction only enhances the beautiful, the eye-catching, and that which is generally worthy of attention in the surroundings.

Space also functions as a buffer between people. Part of our sense of personal freedom is actualised in decision-making that happens within pre-set limits in social situations. Social space in different cultures gives differing degrees of possibility in this sense. Spatial experience takes place in certain biologically and culturally determined ways, those norms are deeply rooted in us especially since the need to fully question them does not present itself very often.

The propensity to try and engage with one’s environment on a fundamental level is typical of human beings. Physical interaction and the relationship with these concrete, physical spaces is assisted both by cognitive processes and technological solutions embedded in the environment. In this sense spatial involvement is a first step towards aesthetic engagement. Emotional associations, or valences, are an important factor when thinking about what characterises everyday spaces. Many of these spaces have an emotionally charged meaning; they have become places of importance to us. However, there are a number of everyday spaces that do not share these emotional characteristics. They can be described as the grey area of the everyday, as in-between-spaces, which just tend to go unnoticed. Airports, shopping malls, waiting rooms, metro platforms, or elevators, for example, can be seen as these kinds of spaces.

Everyday spaces can be called such since in their variety they function as platforms for everyday actions. These actions are characterised by repetition, habits, and their familiarity. They are also often indispensable for the overall functioning of our lives. Once again, the lack and dysfunctions of these spaces can be seen as abrupt changes in the everyday, indeed they can seem to be a failing of the system that holds our days together. On the other hand, on some
occasions these breaks can be a welcome pause in our daily routines. Mostly, the everyday is a combination of the unique and that which keeps repeating yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Some amount of arbitrariness is a necessary part of the actions, phenomena, and spaces that constitute the everyday. In relation to what has been discussed earlier, it is of vital importance to consider everyday spaces and the experiences that they evoke and enhance. These spaces are not always necessarily designed or planned with care. Many of the most functional spaces are formed out of sheer necessity, under circumstances that have been far from ideal.

What we are approaching here finally is an understanding of how values are embedded and in evidence in everyday actions. Starting to dissect and challenge the habitual modes of doing things is a necessary start towards this direction. Examples include such sensitising moments as moving to a new house or neighbourhood or coming home after being away for a long time. During these moments the familiarity of daily routines and values that are normally taken for granted are momentarily set aside. A certain kind of fresh look enables one to see the everyday in a new light, which might be tinged with critical or sentimental emotions. Very soon, however, the veil of familiar routine falls into place and the newly acquired freshness gives place to a certain dull haze of familiarity. One has thus placed oneself back into the setting of everyday life, where a significant proportion of things and actions are predictable.

Recently the changes in technology have been such in nature that they take place mostly under the surface of space-forming objects, whether small or large in scale. Instead of such past inventions as concrete or steel that have made possible radical shifts in architectural solutions, the changes are smaller and implemented in existing and conventional forms of building, but they are of by no means of a lesser effect. Instead of trying to predict the future here, I aim to provide a few glimpses into the ways in which some current trends and new paradigms are changing the way in which everyday spaces are experienced.

Everyday environments are changing all the time. Buildings wear out as a result of being used and the passing of time. Natural conditions erode pavements and the seasons affect weather conditions. Although thoroughly familiar, everyday
environments also turn out to be slightly different every day. When we engage with them every day, we might not see the subtle changes, whereas some changes are more abrupt and might even affect our personal everyday habits. Haptic and tactile experience is more sensitive to gradual change in some occasions. Patina, rust, or the felt qualities of aged materials, such as the softness of the surface of old wood, tell about the ongoing process of change in the built environment. Ordinary day-to-day occurrences foster tactile contact with the environment.

Choosing to live in the inner city, to tie one’s everyday life to its rhythms, insomuch as it is a free choice, is a choice based on personal preferences regarding the use of time and space. As a lifestyle choice city life means accepting a certain level of inconvenience which, however, is merely a different set of conveniences and inconveniences compared to living in the suburbs, for example. Being located in the condensed centre of city life, even though having less space per capita, means experientially more choices within denser conditions. In the city, the space outside one’s home opens up a wealth of opportunities. This experience does not necessarily have anything to do with actually realising those possibilities. Knowing that they exist is enough to empower a city dweller and give him or her a sense of being a part of the pulsating city life.

Streetscapes open up in the city in different directions. Depending on the city plan, the views can stretch far without obstacles, like in Haussmann’s Paris. Smaller and usually older places, such as the Italian village of Montecatini Alto, for example, offer less visibility inside them on the very narrow streets and even less space for the few vehicles to move without bumps and scratches. However, many of those villages were originally formed in high places with good visibility in all directions, and which were thus easy to defend.

Also, nature in cities is brought under the more general notion of the everyday because it is embedded in built human environments:

Most of us live in urbanized spaces where experience of nature is highly mediated. The plants and trees I appreciate on my daily walk have mainly been planted and maintained by humans. They do not play role in traditional ecologies. […] Although most everyday aesthetic experience includes a
natural component my appreciation of that component is more a matter of everyday aesthetics than of nature aesthetics.\textsuperscript{444}

This mediated experience of nature relates to the shift everyday aesthetics marks in starting from the experiential sphere, not from the typically used pre-existing categories of objects or entities such as “nature”, “manmade”, “artefact”, and so on.

**Urban Walking and Mobility**

If spatiality of cities is understood as organised to support two principal functions, dwelling and moving,\textsuperscript{445} then the simplest form and basic unit of moving is walking. Urban walking can be described as a fairly distinguished aesthetic practice.\textsuperscript{446} When moving by foot, one has a more concrete and sensorally satisfying relation with the environment.\textsuperscript{447} Organised walks, and even guided running tours for those who prefer a faster pace, have become increasingly popular among tourists and residents alike in cities. Walking is generally considered a recommended way to explore almost any new city. The views unfold in a pleasant way allowing for occasional spontaneous stops and relatively unhindered use of the senses. By walking, one stays in touch with the environment in a concrete way.

It is clear that different practices of walking play an important role in everyday life. Even in the most sedentary and car-dependent lifestyles walking plays some part. However, especially in urban areas and dense cities walking is often the most economic, pleasant, and even the fastest way to get around. This quotidian walking that is required in the everyday life is usually marked by a certain purpose.\textsuperscript{448} It is driven by the intention of getting from one geographical location to another. However, as de Certeau notes when observing these city walkers,

\textsuperscript{444} Leddy 2012, 97.
\textsuperscript{445} See Rykwert 2002, loc. 1873.
\textsuperscript{446} Ryynänen 2009, 96. For *promenadology* or *strollology* see Burckhardt 2015.
\textsuperscript{447} See e.g. von Bonsdorff 1998b, 32; von Bonsdorff 2005, 79; Ryynänen 2009, 97; Tuan 1974, 5–12, 175, 189–91.
\textsuperscript{448} For a closer look at “the practice of everyday walking in the unfolding experiences of urban pedestrians”, see Middleton 2010. For an “embodied ethnography of walking”, see Paterson 2009.
“Wandermänner”, “the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible.” 449 The practice of walking as such does not reveal the special characteristics of each person’s everyday, but still it forms an essential part of it. The intentions are thus hidden, yet their outer expression moulds the cityspace to a great degree.

Walking is a comparably carefree and harmless activity, it rarely posits any real threat to the environment or to the one who is walking: “walking, at core, is about resting the mind, and not feeling too challenged or threatened”. 450 This insight is important in the realisation that by walking one is in constant motion and thus spatially mobile and able to avoid feeling physically cornered or threatened, at least in most cases. When one is stationary and stays put in a location where one does not particularly want to stay, in a situation that one cannot escape whenever one wishes, the experience can more easily turn into an oppressing one. Motion in itself is soothing and comforting. When walking in the city one blends more easily into the overall urban tissue of people and activities which are always in some kind of motion.

When crossing the street, one has to make one’s way into the stream of people walking on the other side of the street. Their individual pace affects how one is able to situate oneself and how the pace of the steps is changed. This rhythm is regulated by the flow of people and the width of the street. In Venice, for example:

> [p]edestrians have to stop walking constantly to give space to others. The exceptionality of Venice comes from a fact, that even though the ground where to walk on is scarce, the space opens up unrestricted upon water. 451

Accelerating one’s speed in order to fit in smoothly or making a slightly longer turn at the end of a pedestrian crossing might be to prevent causing changes for other people. It is a sign of power relations, of gender and personality differences, and many other minor factors. Cultural differences also play a part in the action that takes place on the pavement. I personally learned to ignore red traffic lights

449 Certeau 1984, 93.
450 Ryynänen 2009, 99.
when crossing streets in Paris. Finnish people usually wait obediently for the light to turn to green even though there are no cars in sight.

The lingering tobacco smoke enters one’s body when someone who smokes walks by on the street. This is a striking (although, it seems, soon to be extinct) reminder of the fact that the air we breathe is shared even more than the space that the body itself occupies with its mass. But each one of us is also an intruder in other person’s space in the city. One’s way of acting, behaving, of carrying oneself affects how this presence is perceived. Bauman’s stranger is personified by each and every one in turn.

Instead of the idealised, aestheticised walk of the flâneur, quotidian walking usually involves some clear purposes and practical goals to be attained. Quick decision-making and prioritising determine the chosen routes and the overall attitude towards the phenomena that are encountered.

In “flâneuristic” tone, Virginia Woolf describes the pleasures of “street rambling” and “street haunting” on the wintery streets of London.\footnote{See “Street Haunting: A London Adventure” (1927) in Woolf 1942.} For Woolf, this experience of joining the “vast republican army of anonymous trampers” is contrasted by the solitary “shell-like covering” and confinement of one’s own room from which one needs to escape every now and then. \footnote{Woolf 1942.} The contrast between life inside and outside the house makes the senses more alert and the walker becomes more perceptive and open to new experiences. On the other hand, Woolf describes how the city offers rest to the mind in its predictable unpredictability as the senses scan the surface of more or less familiar sights: “we are only gliding smoothly on the surface. The eye is not a miner, not a diver, not a seeker after buried treasure. It floats us smoothly down a stream; resting, pausing, the brain sleeps perhaps as it looks.”

City centres feel welcoming even to a lonesome passenger. In Helsinki, my neighbourhood of Punavuori, for example, is at its most peaceful on Sundays. It is then left mainly to locals and tourists, to the few so-called morning people who can enjoy its streetscapes in relative peace. The pleasantness of this experience comes from the exceptionality of the situation. This part of the city and especially
some central streets crossing it, are usually filled with people and associated with buzzing activity. Still, somehow the city that has been built organically with time and consists of different layers, does not seem eerie or empty even when one strolls around it alone.

The extent to which this experience of walking around in the city is spatial is manifested in relations and actions and in ways of perception and navigation. The spatiality of the experience blends with other aspects of the experience, it influences the background of the perceptive states that make observations of the environment possible in the first place. When this very concrete street-bound spatial experience manages to make the aesthetic approach possible, one is not confined to the practical observation of traffic and the potential hazards or obstacles on one’s route, but is free to roam, observe, and even enjoy the streetscape of the city. The aesthetic potentiality is already embedded in the environment, in multiple different imaginable variations and nuances, but the level of one’s ability to grasp it varies according to the multiple elements affecting the situation.

A whole new dimension of spatial experience is brought forth by the terms of accelerated mobility. Further distances among other factors require this change from moving by foot to motorised forms of movement within the city. The underground in Helsinki is notable for the rather simple and straightforward form of its route. The map consists basically of a single line, which branches into two at its eastern end. Thus the spatial planning required to be able to use it is less complicated than in larger metropolis areas that are reached by metro lines. Hidden under the surface layers of the city, moving deep underground in a particular space it forms an ecosystem of its own. Also in the metro, the social dimension of mobility is tied to the coinciding presence of others in a shared space. Even though this is only temporary by nature, the presence of other people affects the experience of transferring from one place to another. Or as the ethnologist Marc Augé puts it:

454 The surface and porosity of urban landscape forms an “urban ‘dermatology’” (Diaconu 2006). In the same vein, Senior Curator of Architecture and Design at MoMA Paola Antonelli tweets about “The skinned city” with a photograph of “Hudson Street, Tribeca, NY, in all its decaying infrastructural glory” (@curiousoctopus 29.9.2014).

455 For the notion of co-presence, proximity, and the social dimension of mobility, see Urry 2013.
The theme of insecurity in the metro would not be so widespread, nor the reactions to any provocation or aggressive behaviour so spirited, were not the idea of contractual consensus essential to the definition of this institution.456

Singular spatialities are compressed into a more uniform model for the sake of convenience and general acceptance.

When moving away from the city, urban space dissolves slowly into more blurred forms of environment. One can leave Helsinki either by train, car, or boat. The waterway is the fastest way out to a totally different kind of surroundings, whereas a car ride follows predetermined urban pathways outwards. Depending on the form of traveling, the amount and quality of personal space in relation to the surroundings changes. Moving by train reveals a completely different landscape, as the city slowly unfolds and the landscape changes into that of the countryside. The railway penetrating the landscape is not itself revealed to the passenger inside the train. Only from the outside can one see how it participates in the landscape, intruding or complementing it, depending on the perspective. At some points the highway with processions of moving vehicles travels parallel to the train. One can see the drivers in their cars, many alone, some sharing their space bubble with other passengers. The pace of the train is unaffected by that of the cars. Their spatialities are not in any other relation except for an occasional glimpse one is able to have of the inside of the other vehicle.

Sometimes driving a car gives a sense of freedom, of being able to move wherever the road takes one for as long as there is gas in the engine. At other times, the traffic with its rules is an unpleasant and frightening necessity. One is tied to an uncertain terrain filled with potential accidents and collisions. Most of the time, it is also very boring, simply something one must endure in order to move between two locations. In any case, driving as an actual experience, even though it has aesthetically rewarding sides to it, usually differs from the associations attached to it by advertisements and other cultural imagery.457 It is most often monotonous and spatially isolating from the environment outside the car.

456 Augé 2002, 44.
457 See Naukkarinen 2005.
the proximate shell of the vehicle.

Views that open up from the windows of a train are usually more varied and interesting than those that open up from a vehicle. This is due to the way in which railways are generally built in closer proximity to the surrounding nature whereas roads need more space around them for the sake of increased visibility. Railways thus penetrate more directly into the environment and in a train one usually has more time to concentrate on what is seen from the windows. Thomas Leddy writes that some of his “own strongest aesthetic experiences have come from viewing junkyards and storage areas along the train route from San Jose to San Francisco.”\textsuperscript{458} The experience specifically from the train is distancing and imposing enough, and the movement of the train opens up an expanded spatial continuum to give the views an aesthetically imposing panoramic quality.

Railways used to symbolize to me the same freedom and almost infinite borderlessness that the sea came to symbolize later. But they are not only symbols, for in their spatiality they share similarities that are concretely definable in terms of openness, possibility, and continuity. The railroad tracks leading to Helsinki Central railway station are visible on the ground, they come through a very narrow passage between the rocks and then again between two stretches of the seashore at Linnunlaulu and Töölönlahti. This vein that leads straight to the core of the city receives its deserved end point at the station, which functions as a gateway to the city.

**Case Study: Helsinki Central Railway Station**

A common example of urban everyday spaces that are often imposing enough to compete with cathedrals, are railway station buildings. Helsinki Central railway station has been appraised for its architecture even though it is historically a compromise between the original plans of Eliel Saarinen that won him the task and the changes made to these plans by the time of its final opening in 1919. In

\textsuperscript{458} Leddy 2008; Leddy 2012, 96.
this sense, it does not represent thoroughly National Romantic or Jugend style, but is instead more eclectic, partly because the building process took a long time and was called to a halt by the First World War. Nowadays, architects and art historians alike laud the building but it is also highly admired by tourists as well as by Helsinki citizens. It has been nominated one of the 10 most beautiful railway stations in the world,\textsuperscript{459} as well as often being mentioned by eminent experts as their favourite building in Helsinki.\textsuperscript{460} Its aesthetic quality in the traditional sense as an architectural object thus seems to be unquestionable.

In the general cityscape of Helsinki, the building is an example of something that could also be labelled “harmless” architecture, and it represents a period that is currently highly valued, partly because of its positive nationalistic tone and also as a reminder of a time which is considered the golden era of Finnish art. Among the people of Helsinki, it is established enough not to stir controversy. The space of the station is defined and enclosed by its architectural structure and it acts further as a node connecting diverse spatial experiences. According to its originally set function, the station literally opens up connections to places near and far, and at the same time it functions as a central and stable point in the everyday life of tens of thousands of commuters each day.

\textsuperscript{459} E.g. in Glancey 2013, the station is compared to New York’s Grand Central Terminal in its “aesthetic punch”; in Hall 2012, which describes it one of Europe’s “railway cathedrals”; and in Cottrell 2012, listed among “the most beautiful train stations in the world”.

\textsuperscript{460} For an interview with Mark Wigley, see Frilander 2014.
The new rise of rail travel is noticeable in the appreciation of the station building. In many countries these stations were seen as obsolete at the beginning of the 1970s, since it was the era before the oil crisis. The nostalgic image of rail travel has received a new boost as the ecological choice in recent years. Also the cultural value of this particular space was yet again revealed by the numerous objections when the international chain restaurant Burger King opened its doors in the legendary restaurant space on the building’s east side in February 2014. Railway stations in accordance with their function are implicitly considered to have a somewhat “nobler” purpose than what commercial places such as shopping centres embody.

The central function of moving from one place to another via railway stations is a necessity for most people, not a luxury as such. Even though it has to be kept in mind that there is and always has been some commercial activity at railway
stations as well. Augé’s notion of non-places applies to railway stations to some extent, even though older architecture has endowed these node points in space with somewhat more distinctive features than what is visible at contemporary airports, for example.

The Helsinki Central station serves as an example of a space that was specifically designed to embellish and elevate a very practical and mundane purpose. The model for these kinds of buildings of the industrial era was adopted from older architecture of imposing scale, such as sacral architecture or concert halls. The station also affects a larger area around it, not least because it inevitably forms a focal point for traffic coming in from all directions. Even though railway stations and the environment surrounding them are not usually considered the safest or most attractive areas in any city, the familiarity and the human scale of the Helsinki Central station together with its architectural and spatial details can be considered to make the whole area more accessible and even more inviting compared to many others.

The surroundings of the station include within close proximity such monumental, emblematic, and institutional buildings as the Ateneum, which hosts nowadays a branch of the Finnish National Gallery, the Finnish National Theatre built in National Romantic style, and even the Casino Helsinki building. The spacious Railway Square is located on the east side, where a skating rink has been erected during recent winters. The west side opens up to the Eliel Square, which is slightly more developed and less traditional in its appearance than the larger Railway Square on the other side. The location of the station right in the core of the city is quite remarkable too.

Helsinki Central station is a place that combines the familiar and the strange, the known and the unknown in the everyday in a way that describes our relation to everyday spaces in general. As a public space it is well-known to the inhabitants of Helsinki, but still its character and the experiences it provides are always

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461 This type of recycling of forms is common practice in architecture; e.g. Carl Ludwig Engel in the previous century copied to some extent the imposing scale and layout of Roman baths for the library building of the University of Helsinki (1836, built between 1840–45). This building is still in its original use under the name of the National Library of Finland.
changing, fluctuating with the situation and its ways of use at any given time. Currently the building is going through a series of renovations, which affects its use in some minor ways. This in itself sheds some light on its use, and on how the experience of its visitors proves necessarily malleable and resilient to a certain amount of change. The station is among the most used spaces in the city and thus in an ever-changing state, on the architectural level, however, it remains the same and reminds us of its history and the past lives that have flowed through it. This combination of permanence and change makes the space experientially interesting. Besides architectural grandeur, its aesthetic qualities are defined by its use, and by the effect its spatiality has on the everyday experience of its users.

The station is understood in this way not so much as a piece of architecture, not perhaps even as a building, but more as a node, a spatial connecting point of relations, actions, and experiences that take place in it. Even though these two approaches cannot be separated in a more comprehensive analysis of the building, it is within the scope of this study to peel away these different levels in order to have a more profound understanding of the experiential nature of this particular space. Also some practising architects, for example Pallasmaa and Zumthor, have decisively challenged the externalised point of view of architecture. It seems essential in this context to remind ourselves, in order to assess or “employ” the aesthetic quality of a building, we must “take part through our presence in the space formed or created by architecture”,

I wish to present Helsinki Central railway station as an example of “everyday architecture”. It clearly serves its function well, but has not traditionally been considered everyday architecture because of its monumentality. It is precisely this friction between the outside form and the everyday function that makes the space instinctively appealing and approachable. Its main function has persisted throughout the 100 years it has been in use, but the built space has also acquired new functions along the way. The station as such has thus already shown resilience and flexibility in the changing emphasis of its different functions. It is not an inhabited place, a place for dwelling, but yet a lived and thoroughly human

463 See Carlson 1999.
space. As such it is part of the everyday environment of at least tens of thousands of people, as the daily commute by train has become increasingly a quotidian activity for people living in or in the proximity of the capital. The daily rhythm of arriving and parting trains guided mostly by predetermined timetables affects the flow and rhythm of the people moving through it.

The everydayness of the inside space of the station is partly disguised and obscured by its architectural grandeur; in this sense, the building provides the visitor with an experience of “everyday sublimity”. The monumental quality of the building in discourses concerning it usually overshadows its “everyday quality”, which is pronouncedly functional yet also strongly experiential by nature. In its intentional monumentality, the space of the station, both in- and outside of it is different from those spaces that are most often coined under the definition of “everyday environments”. The notion of the everyday thus spreads from residential neighbourhoods to concern also spaces as arenas for commuting, work, hobbies, and so on.

The experience of spatiality in the everyday context is often conditioned by ingrained habits. These habits function in a certain relation to the “place quality” of familiar locations, but also to the “spatial quality” of these vary same locations. It is as if in the city setting, for example, two different filters exist with both intentional and unintentional spaces. Place quality allows for an attachment of memories, emotions, and so on, whereas the level of spatiality is related to a more basal level of physical interaction and is also more prone to change and new levels of experience. However, it is precisely this “spatial quality” that opens up different directions and makes more complex experiences possible since it is in itself unfinished, open, and prone to change: it is linked in a dynamic way to the actual changes that take place on a graspable level of the physical surroundings.

Because of its spatial qualities, the high-vaulted Central Hall of Helsinki Central offers many experiential possibilities. A phenomenological approach to this particular case can help in understanding how the lived, perceived, and

464 For more on the notion of the everyday sublime, see Chapter IV.
465 The sociological approach is another way of addressing the use of the building, see e.g. Galanakis 2008.
experienced space described by Bollnow is related to the architectural, designed, and intentional space. The designed and built space obviously provides the material settings for the experiences taking place inside it. These experiences in turn form an altogether other, new experienced and engaged understanding of space. Within this space, different functions and actions unfold organically into a combination of experiences that in their part structure the everyday of the users of the station.

Helsinki Central railway station, Central Hall
Photo: Janne Lehtinen

In his account of experienced space Bollnow clarifies that experienced space is not about any random psychological reality or “subjective colouring which is imposed on the space”\textsuperscript{466}. It can be argued though that this subjective colouring

\textsuperscript{466} Bollnow 2011, 19–20.
or even psychological reality cannot be totally avoided. Bollnow strongly opposes defining space according to this subjective colouring since, for him, it seems to fade out the actual concrete space to which the experience is linked. Instead, I argue here that the subjective, partly clearly psychological level of experience can be included in the notion of space that Bollnow is assembling. By this psychological level I refer mainly to the reactions induced by experiential spatial qualities. On this level, the presence of other people or the habitual nature of actions, for example, are important factors.

Experienced space is in any case more closely linked to perception transmitted by a mixture of the senses, something that is of the essence when the relation to spatial surroundings is under investigation. In accordance with these phenomenological principles of spatial investigation is Tuan’s “emphasis on the direct, intimate experience”. Both Bollnow and Tuan start the analysis of spatial experience by anchoring the experience to a “corporeal schema” that is naturalised to a certain extent. The physical and corporeal basis of spatial experience thus grounds other layers of spatiality and allows them to take place. Inside the station space, the corporeal schema of the passers-by in turn anchors them in the space and bases their experience.

When it comes to the sensory aspects of spatial experience, eyesight provides an important means of perceiving how the space inside buildings unfolds. However, also in the context of the station, other senses have an important role in determining how spatial experience is formed. The soundscape of the station consists of the constant sound of the outside traffic; the sounds made by the people inside, and echoed smaller sounds building up into a surprisingly pleasant and consistent auditory constellation. Spatially, the imposing echo reflected from the walls of the high and open central space reinforces this soundscape. From the point of view of acoustic design, the building could be judged a success in this sense. The soundscape effectuates the impressiveness of spatial design, yet on a quite pleasant scale and more as a sort of background hum than a very

467 Tuan 2008, 6.
468 Tuan 2008, 35–36.
469 See also Pallasmaa 2005b.
noticeable feature of the station.

As one would expect, the smellscape at the Helsinki Central railway station also adds to the overall spatial and aesthetic experiences. Food stalls and coffee shops are mostly placed among commercial structures that line the smaller Kiosk Hall near the platforms. They exude smells that either tickle the palate or seem altogether repulsive depending on individual preferences and other changing variables. As a minor example, a tiny doughnut shop was opened in the first years of the 2010s in the Central Hall and especially in the beginning the sense of smell must have been harnessed as one of the central foci of its promotion campaign since an overwhelmingly sugary and strong smell of doughnuts invaded the whole space. As a regular passer-by one could not help but notice this sudden change in the smellscape. The invasive nature of smells is widely recognised but also taken as an obvious part of city life, something that one cannot always escape even when one would wish to.

The space of the Helsinki Central railway station itself was used as a setting for an auditory installation during the 2010 IHME Contemporary Art Festival. Susan Philipsz’s (b. 1965) sound installation *When Day Closes* was created for this particular space specifically for this occasion. The imposing space of the Central Hall with its acoustic grandeur emphasised the contrast of a modest voice singing a song with Finland’s most notable composer, Jean Sibelius. The artist intended the sound of the work to function as an intervention that cuts through the everyday sounds of the hall. The artwork was successful in bringing an element of something intimate and private to the public space, amplifying it, and in that way making the experiencer more aware of his or her environment and thus appreciating the present moment.

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470 Built to its recent form after being destroyed by fire in 1950; Högström 2012, 63.
471 The smell of meat pies is described as having been previously “an old standby of the station”; Högström 2012, 59.
Philipsz’s artwork revealed some of the immense number of aesthetic possibilities that are present in the familiar city space that we inhabit and use everyday. This spatio-aesthetic relation is thus already present there as a potential, but artworks such as this can emphasise it and make it explicit for the users of these particular spaces. The human voice in Philipsz’s work evokes a sense of close proximity and intimacy, whereas the grand scale of the space seems to be in contrast with this. Site-specificity in this case is an integral part of the formation of the work; it would be an altogether different piece presented in a different space. Installations in the most traditional sense arouse the haptic factor of spatial experience, but in this case the work functions through the auditory receptors. Instead of relating art in the public space to the historical tradition of art, I find that the experiences it enables are crucial in helping to develop a better understanding of the relation to the surroundings and what they have come to represent.
When it comes to the phenomenon of crowding, the station provides ample material for study. People either move in flocks according to train schedules or stand by waiting alone or in smaller groups. The flow of people is directed to follow an axis going through the Central Hall. This was not originally the case, since the inside of the building was planned more along the lines of different functions such as first buying tickets, then leaving the luggage, and finally stepping into a waiting room defined by three distinct ticket classes. Nowadays, these functions are no longer in operation: tickets are bought online or from a ticket vending machine, everyone carries their own luggage to the train, and so on. Thus the spatial layout of the inside space has also changed. In addition, the growing number of passengers has affected these changes.

The almost incessant flow of people moves through the main doors to the inner spaces and towards the back doors that lead to platforms. Another axis of movement leads through the side doors located in the east and west ends of the station. This stream of people is the single most notable force that aligns the use of space and creates paths in it. Whenever a train arrives, especially at peak traffic hours in the morning and late in the afternoon, the stream of people intensifies for a while and it seems almost impossible to make one’s way in the opposite direction. The pressure created by this herd of people is, however, nowhere near the kind of passenger densities found in heavily populated cities such as Tokyo or Mexico City, but still the phenomenon is recognisable at Helsinki railway station and the effect it creates functions as a similar platform for potentially increasing spatial anxiety.

However, it is not only movement patterns and the pace of people that define the station space. The benches at the main entrance of the station form a place to rest for tired travellers and homeless people alike. Unlike in many big cities, the station is not open 24 hours a day, but instead closes its doors for 3 hours

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474 The Central Hall used to function as a waiting hall, but nowadays it is mostly a space for walking through. There are significantly fewer places to sit than in the early 1960s, before the escalators to the station tunnel were built. Högström 2012, 39.
475 Helsinki has not traditionally been a “24-hour city” even in any stretched sense of the concept, but faces increasing pressure to change in this direction. For more on “the 24-hour city”, see Adams, Moore, Cox, Croxford, Refaee & Sharples 2007.
between 2 am and 5 am. This acts as a reminder that the space is still not as public as many of the city’s open-air public spaces, squares, and so on. This is a notable decision in a country where sub-zero temperatures are common for a considerable part of the year. Crime, the role of the dispossessed, and disturbing degrees of alcohol and drug abuse are a part of the so-called social issues that affect the atmosphere of the station as well. The surveillance at the station is fairly unnoticeable for an average passer-by, yet it still exists and for certain segregated groups of people it is overtly and even exaggeratedly present.476

The station functions as a hub for approximately 200,000 passengers a day.477 This number is reached daily when people enter the building from any of the four main directions or from beneath from the metro station below street level. People enter and exit this space and place fulfilling the trajectories of their own lives, at least when it comes to the predeterminable parts of them. The perceptual space as a palpable possibility forms parts of the lived-space of these existences in indeterminable ways. The intentional function and the actual taking-place of the everyday collide in public spaces such as this station. The ramifications of its design as a building define its aesthetic qualities, but the value of these qualities and the meaning they might attain is finally determined by how the space is used and the possibilities this opens up. In another context, the same aesthetic qualities might not gain any attention or they might even contribute to a negative overall experience. Such would be an unsustainable dissonance between the aesthetic qualities of architectural elements and a brutal, suffocating atmosphere created by activities and social tensions that take place in the same space.

The very presence of other people in the shared space matters as well. As an individual each of us is bound to act in a sphere of personal space478 which both asserts our actions and shields us from the space and presence of others. In this sense, totally free-flowing and unencumbered spatial presence is not even possible. Barthes’ notion of proxemics as a “restricted space that immediately surrounds the subject” or as “the sphere of the immediate gesture” which forms...

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476 Galanakis 2008, 199.
477 See Högström 2012.
478 For more on the notion of personal space, see Chapter III.
the “dialectics of distance” that leads to an “ethics of distance” comes to mind when considering the entangled relations that take place among strangers in the station space every day. This “ethics of distance” seems justified in describing the fluctuating distance to others, the changing spatial dimension that moulds people as ethical beings. This ethics could be considered to be a result of a personal ethos, of developing values related to spatial experience, and to the physical reality of the presence of others. Basing an ethics in this way on preaesthetic spatial experience gives way to a very concrete way of grasping the sphere of fundamental human relations.

The unmanageability associated with the presence of other people is an integral part of the contemporary urban experience. Instead of encountering other people in the proper sense of the word, co-existing is a more appropriate term to describe this side of the experience. Transgressing the borders of personal space happens on a daily base in urban settings, but how these crossings are brought about and reacted to are important for the overall spatial, aesthetic, as well as ethical experience.

The bodily space does not hinder the senses from extending beyond the boundaries to the surrounding space. For example, the inner organs of the ear that form the sense of hearing capture the physical form of sound waves in the echo of the station space. This sensory input then moulds into one part of the overall experience. Does this experience initiated as spatial prove to be an aesthetic one in the end? When considering experiences that take “a wrong turn”, Arnold Berleant’s notion of negative aesthetics comes to mind. Berleant defines this negativity as “sensory experience that has no clear positive value” or as aesthetic experience that is “perceptually distressing, repellant, painful, or has effects that are harmful or destructive”.

Public spaces at worst can be aesthetically alienating in the sense that the aesthetic experience understood as a sensory-based engagement has no possibility to take place. Oppressive spatial conditions, physical danger, and other such

479 Barthes 2002, 155–156.
480 Berleant 2011, 75.
481 Berleant 2011, 79.
clear factors can hinder aesthetic potentiality from actualising even in the most familiar settings of everyday life. Even the numbing repetition of quotidian life can still provide a setting for a generally positive aesthetic tone for experiences, when familiar features in the environment provide the comfort and joy of recognition and repetitive subtle reminders of their aesthetic value. This is the case that architecturally relatively successful built spaces such as the Helsinki Central railway station illustrate particularly well.

By this short introduction of the Helsinki Central railway station, I wish to exemplify some aspects of spatial experiences that are to be linked to the multiple uses of built everyday spaces. It goes to strengthen my hypothesis how spatial experiences can be understood to be preaesthetic in nature, preparing or making possible actual aesthetic experiences. I chose as an example an urban building that is truly an everyday space for citizens. More than a building it is also a node, a connecting point of itineraries and as such, plays extensively different roles in people’s lives. Art plays a role in turning implicit experiences into explicit ones, in this case Susan Philipsz’s sound installation positioned the visitors of the Central Hall in a different way by challenging their habitual, auditory experiences and also by bringing an intimate element into the public space of the station building.

Alternatives: Temporary and Transferable Spaces in the City

Kaarina Kaikkonen (b. 1952) is worth mentioning in this context as an artist whose works have affected the way I have personally experienced cities and become interested in the spatial and aesthetic potentiality of urban life. This connection crystallised to me during the process of writing this study. Even though this particular example also comes from the sphere of art, it is so closely tied to the experiential space of the city that it helps to assess them in a way that is only possible for art in the best instances. Kaikkonen’s installations challenge and question the ways in which city spaces are conventionally experienced. Among
many made in similar fashion, her installation *Paths of Life*\(^{482}\) (2011) consisted of hanging used men’s shirts above the street crossing between Lönnrotinkatu and Yrjönkatu Streets. This particular work made one of the main traffic routes to and out of the city centre more attractive to people passing the crossing. It thus underlined the fact that it is also an important node to the pedestrian traffic even though it seems at this state heavily monopolised by motor vehicles.

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\(^{482}\) Kaarina Kaikkonen: *Paths of Life* installation, Galerie Forsblom, 7.5.–4.9.2011.
Kaikkonen defines herself first and foremost as a sculptor, which directs towards seeing her artworks as spatial formations relating to and reflecting the space they are installed into. The temporary spatial existence of her works shows an unimaginable dimension in the cityscape. Kaikkonen’s installations often refer to roads and paths, and in this particular case, also to finding one’s path. The men’s shirts function as graspable, functional, and even wearable reminders of the repetitive nature of the everyday. They are literally elevated to higher levels, towards the mutable eternities that the sky is bound to represent for city dwellers. They thus offer a vertically delineated path for the eye and to the beholder of that eye, to the space that opens up high over sidewalks and the crossing with its ongoing flow of cars. This space between buildings has been there before this artwork, but is only now made visible as the extension of the urban space that it truly is. A reminder of the times or cultures in which it is customary to hang laundry between buildings, Kaikkonen offers a jubilant version of this kind of literal elevation of the everyday in the somewhat underused and neglected vertical streetspace of the city.

Kaikkonen’s shirts belong to my personal history since my first contact with them was in Tampere, in the late 1990s. Her artwork Shadow (1999) was installed in a narrow part of Satakunnankatu Street at the west side of Satakunnansilta Bridge. The shirts hanging high above the street lined by old industrial red brick buildings nodded towards the city’s history as the home of Finnish textile industry. When I then saw the more recent shirt installation in Helsinki, I was faced with a layer of my personal history contained and beautifully preserved in them. For me, they tied experientially together the two central cities of my formative years.

By art as well as by architecture, temporary and experientially enriched spaces can be created and integrated into the city space. Urban cultures at best are prone to challenging their own forms, when given the chance and not prohibited by too many restrictions. Defined by openness in the sense that these spaces are mouldable by their users, new forms of spatio-aesthetic exploration cannot but enhance the relation citizens have with their environment. Social patterns and different usages for built spaces eventually determine their quality. The human
use of space is, however, prone to change and thus also the requirements for built spaces vary according to multiple variables. In the Nordic countries, for example, inside spaces gain greater or less significance depending on the changing seasons with their great variations in temperature. During summer, life spreads outside to the city space, for example when innovative uses of forgotten nooks and courtyards between buildings fill with action.

Architecture as spatial creation is juxtaposed with almost organically formed human conventions and habits. Appropriating living spaces from this point of view requires giving up the rigid assumption that everyday experiences can be planned and orchestrated in advance. Instead, their contingency and possibilities of variation require flexibility from the environment. In this sense semi-planned or unplanned environments have proven to be generous in permitting a wide variety of different kinds of actions. If one thinks about Berlin, for example, the unintentional and even accidental layout of some parts of the city is exactly a part of what has made activities flourish and the whole city experientially so vibrant. When spaces are not allotted a certain rigid function, the spatial experience related to them also has more open-ended possibilities. The urban experiential tissue thus becomes thicker and this leads to aesthetically and experientially denser cities.

Mobile vehicles provide an example that has intrigued many, both in order to explain personal space, as was shown in an earlier chapter of this study, but also to illustrate an idealised vision of fluent mobility and aestheticised relation to the environment. Communal ways of moving such as by boat, bus, train, tram, or underground combine a complex social sphere to this theme and have been studied in this sense by anthropologists, sociologists, as well as psychologists. When it comes to personal space, these spaces offer interesting examples of individual preferences and largely unwritten social norms blending together. These already conventional vehicles within urban areas, even though mobile, are very rarely dedicated to anything else than the function of transferring people between places. They are not very flexible in the sense that the inside of a tram, for example, could be transformed to serve other functions, even for the temporary amusement of the passengers. Mobile vehicles in the city give us a glimpse of flexible, transferrable spaces, but they do not fully illustrate their
implicit possibilities to affect the city dweller’s experiential sphere of the everyday.

Among newer designs that concretise the concepts of flexibility and transferability in relation to mobility, *Space Buster*[^483] by a Berlin-based design studio Raumlabor is literally a transferrable “space bubble” that forms a city congregation space whenever and wherever one is needed. Space Buster changes according to the environment where it is parked and assembled. The bubble-like outer shape is organic enough to at least resemble a natural form. An important factor molding the experience of this space is the translucency of its outer wall. The notion of site-specificity becomes less rigid since solutions such as these are not permanent but change according to variables that can be determined following the needs and conditions. These kinds of space designs have the ability to temporarily enhance aesthetically deprived spaces but also to make visible some of the most obvious assumptions and habitual views on everyday environments. The fresh perspective helps to reassess experiences ranging from spatial and social to aesthetic.

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[^483]: See also http://raumlabor.net/space-buster-ii-generator-ny-city. In a similar way, *The Kitchen Mobile* by Raumlabor (Berlin 2014, prev. Liverpool, Duisburg, Utrecht, and Venice 2006--) by Raumlabor “is a mobile sculpture that brings the kitchen into the city”: http://raumlabor.net/kuchenmonument-2
Space Buster can be labelled a nomad space that structures and organises space according to changing purposes and needs. It is also a reminder of nomadic building forms that are to be found within the context of contemporary cultures. A nomadic lifestyle among humans has existed as long as human beings themselves have existed, but parts of this tradition translated into supporting contemporary needs can help us to understand some vital aspects of contemporary everyday experiences. Not art, not quite architecture in the traditional sense, Space Buster is more like a nomadic portable space, an expressively usable and re-usable space. The pneumatic structure of the central space solves the problem of a temporary construction in an amusing and unconventional way.\textsuperscript{484} Yet the form and the space it forms are easily recognisable even though the more specific function to which it is used is not immediately accessible. Thus offering more privacy than outdoor congregation spaces, it also provides the extra comfort of not being affected by weather conditions. By simply driving and reassembling, the relocation of Space Buster can form a new space inside almost any kind of environment.

\textsuperscript{484} In the sphere of art these types of spaces have been explored and constructed by Alan Parkinson (b. 1949) with his pneumatic sculptures and monumental inflatable structures.
Besides temporary structures such as Space Buster, the already existing buildings and other spatial structures can be provided with new functions in a way that still acknowledges more or less their past, yet allows new ways of using them to take place. Parsons and Carlson bring up the changing functions of urban public spaces that serve to provide “a space for civic events”. This kind of process of change can be traced in the “widespread phenomenon of ‘adaptive re-use’ of architectural works”. Examples of this are old converted European church spaces that have acquired a new life as shopping malls, art spaces, or nightclubs. In this sense, the “proper functions” of buildings are dynamic and related to the overall changes that take place in the collective sphere and general mentality towards sharing space. Redirecting the use of old, existing buildings affects the experiences related to them, but often a “better fit” in the architectural qualities and the new function of built space can be a crucial factor in igniting and moulding better experiences, both spatial and aesthetic.

Sustainability issues and ecological arguments have assisted fairly recently in presenting a new paradigm for context-appropriate architecture. Recycled materials and the new aesthetics of scarcity are serving both as an inspiration, challenge, and a necessity for designers and architects alike. Instead of the ideal

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486 To the examples provided by Parsons and Carlson I might add one specifically from Helsinki: the church of the Lutheran Evangelical movement in Fredrikinkatu 42, which was turned into a nightclub in the 1990s. Now plans exist to renovate the space back to its original use.
of permanence, notions of sustainable permanence and resilience are gaining popularity. This is not a new view, since in Japanese architecture, for example, temporality and malleability of built spaces have traditionally been appreciated. Experimental mobile spaces challenge aesthetic views by spatially changing everyday environments. Innovative space design concepts assist in seeing the possibilities inherent in different environments. The value is in how they make visible the process and whether individual processes of appreciation and the way in which the experience is accumulated are both moulded and mouldable. Instead of the perspective of city planning, architecture as a construction or art historical practice, spatial design can take socially or individually varying purposes. Often these experiments are possible to make in the fairly flexible context of art, where experimental and short-time projects are more acceptable. How the innovative results will be transferred and adapted to more permanent architectural and planning purposes is largely to be seen.
Conclusions

My aim has been to open new possibilities for acknowledging and interpreting the dialogue between spatial and aesthetic aspects as they become manifested in everyday experiences. There is reason to believe that when parallelly studied, the spheres of the everyday and that of art show that the so-called high points and the most mundane activities of life have a shared solid experiential ground. The aesthetic quality of this common ground helps in assessing what is eventually the role and perceived meaning of the aesthetic in people’s lives, in both ordinary and extraordinary situations.

I find the topic of spatial experience especially intriguing, since it touches upon the sphere of human needs and the very basic necessities of life but also relates to the most memorable highlights of life by the same token. This relates to what Saito calls “the power of the aesthetic” which has potency to improve “our life and society”.488 Thus the study of spatial experience as it is related to aesthetic experiences can also be understood as part of going through experiential prerequisites to develop social aesthetics further, which both Saito and more explicitly Berleant have tentatively formulated:

We should explore the aesthetics of the constituents of the

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488 Saito 2011, 12.
environment, namely artefacts, human activities and social relationships.489

Social aesthetics is understood here as an aesthetics of social relationships and thus is notably different from sociological aesthetics. Berleant’s theory of aesthetic engagement, which is based strongly on sensory experience, marks one version of a return to the emphasis on sensory aspects of aesthetic experiences.

Aesthetic engagement offers a wide and flexible alternative to traditional ways of defining aesthetic experience. I have explored how the experience of space in particular affects aesthetic experiences that can be understood with this idea of engaging closely with the environment in mind. The environment has to be taken into consideration as a large entity consisting of both the surrounding material properties, conditions, and possibilities and the human relations, practices and actions that take place in it. By this elaboration, one gets closer to understanding why Berleant states that “[e]nvironmental aesthetics, as theory and as experience, can help us achieve a truer sense of the human condition”.490

It is clear enough that this human condition together with its current settings and circumstances also includes the social sphere as well as a great part of that which constitutes the everyday, in all its multiplicity of forms tied to different styles of living found around the globe.

The idea of preaesthetic experience, conditions, and qualities is introduced here as a tool to describe a phase and element of experience. Separating spatial experience so that it is seen as an experiential mode that precedes the aesthetic might seem artificial at first but on closer inspection, this separation is easily justified. Especially the examples concerning everyday spaces could not be understood without figuring out the complex ways in which these experiences are connected to the material framework of the concrete spaces in question. Besides enabling aesthetic experiences to take place, spatial experience deeply affects these experiences. This study was intended to be wide enough in its scope and synthetic enough in its approach in order to bring together some of the fields and theories most prominently dealing with issues of spatial and

489 Saito 2010.
490 Berleant 1992, xiii.
In the final chapter I have shown how spatio-aesthetic qualities become manifested either in already established and possibly also historically significant and even monumental public spaces (Helsinki Central railway station), experimental art installations that emphasise and accentuate the already existing experiential features of the environment (Kaikkonen’s works), or new forms of spatial design that create novel, transitory, and even mobile space solutions that transform the experience of the city space (Space Buster). These forms have been presented here as examples of different types of artefacts that bring out and highlight the spatio-aesthetic quality of urban everyday spaces. The interdependency of spatial and aesthetic experiences thus becomes clearer in quest of better life quality in urban environments.

Spatial experience is thus to be found at the core of environmental aesthetics, especially when keeping in mind how Saito redefines the field to cover the sphere of the everyday. With everyday aesthetics in focus, Saito reminds us of “the indispensability of […] sensibilities to our moral life” of “qualities such as sympathy, compassion, a caring attitude, sensibility and humility”. Any philosophical definition that contains the notion of “the social” implies an ethical factor and an ethical perspective on the social relations that are concerned. Thus investigating how space, aesthetics, and ethics are tied together belongs to the core of aesthetics. Spatially manifested relations work as an impetus and a motivator to create a commonly shared ethics. The simple fact of having to live together, being face-to-face with others in everyday situations, is thus behind a certain minimal notion of ethics that is realised in the most common everyday situations.

Eventually, how the spatial is linked to the ethical, to the relation with others, is of the ultimate essence. The notion of the “aesthetic encounter” is one of the results that can be proposed here to stem from different uses of space. Thus Barthes’ notion of “the ethics of distance” which has motivated me all along seems justified in describing the fluctuating distance to others, the changing spatial dimension that moulds humans as ethical as well as aesthetic beings. This ethics

491 Saito 2007, 208.
could be considered to be a result of a personal ethos, of developing values that are related to spatial experience, to the physical reality of the presence of others. Basing an ethics this way gives way to a concrete way of grasping the sphere of human relations that mould us as individuals in a very fundamental way.

The ethics of distance links spatial features with ethical values. What it measures and defines are the boundaries, individual spatial limits that depend on cultural norms, individual habits, and the discernible patterns of everyday life. Empathy is spatially conditioned in many social situations. What happens on the threshold where sensory knowledge of the material world and reactions to it by the mind merge, has been of initial interest here. Ethics cannot be based on a notion of space but instead on that of distance, since it already implies bodily-based human relations in space. Does this thus establish a relational basis for ethics? Spatial motivation for ethics does not seem an altogether far-fetched idea, since, for example, pragmatic models for living together are at the heart of creating solutions needed in the development of urban life.

Body-centred environmental aesthetics offers a new approach to the environment together with people’s relation to it and to each other in it. Berleant’s notion of aesthetic engagement includes this kind of relation to space. However, reactions to space and actions that take place within it are not easy to distinguish. Social relations are to a great extent a blend of both, one might say. What happens in the public space of a city, for example, depends largely on how the space itself is formed. This has been seen once again prominently in the revolutions of the former Soviet states as well as in the recent Arab Spring uprisings.492 City planners and heads of states through millennia have been aware of this and among the best-known results are such large-scale developments as Haussmannian Paris and the central city plan of Beijing. Also, collective city spaces that are formed more spontaneously by the citizens themselves, under less direct rule and planning, such as Christiania in Copenhagen, reflect the needs for supported ways to congregate.

In many approaches, ethnographic, anthropological, and psychological studies have set the scope for the study of personal space and the experiences that go with

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492 See Elshahed 2011.
The aesthetic approach either seems to be taken as a given or is totally absent. However, supposing that the experienced space is first and foremost relational, validation for aesthetic concerns becomes apparent. This idea also presupposes that the richness of human experience is not comprehensively explained without the perspective of philosophy. A synthesis of the existing theories of different disciplines has been attempted here to support this realisation.

Aesthetic well-being that stems from relations with others is inevitably tied to spatial aspects of experience in multiple ways. Interaction or interplay between people is by nature based on spatial distinctions, boundaries, and hierarchies. This study has as its aim to establish a strong and previously unacknowledged relation between spatial experience and aesthetic experience. Another aim is to tentatively point out and present new opportunities of applying the ensuing theories on specific spatio-aesthetic issues to different practices. The motivation for this kind of study stems from multiple sources, from the challenges that growing population density creates all the way to the hope of enabling better experiences by understanding the prerequisites of aesthetic experiences and their relation to the material conditions of their surroundings.

Inside the field, the notion of engagement is interestingly linked to the ongoing democratisation process of aesthetics. From the phenomenon of aestheticisation to everyday aesthetics, the overall tendency has been to widen the previous restricted notions of the aesthetic. Questioning the principle of disinterestedness in relation to aesthetic experiences and judgments has been at the forefront since the politicising of the aesthetic has become once again not only acceptable but also necessary. Ecological issues as well as those concerning human rights, for example, are understood to require that all values are openly discussed. When it comes to aesthetics, normative notions of environmental aesthetics have been at the forefront of this change. These tumults in the field of aesthetics reflect the more general need for a shift in philosophical thinking. Integrating ethics to other, previously more segregated fields corresponds with the escalating complication of the so-called “wicked problems” that challenge the knowledge production systems of contemporary societies.

On an individual level, how to live well is once again one of the most
fundamental questions posed by philosophy. Here the relation to the environment is also central: natural as well as urban environments, everyday as well as special occasion environments (such as different kinds of arenas dedicated to displaying and forming art) are under scrutiny when considering what kind of engagement with the environment fosters well-being, or suppresses it. Living well, besides some very urgent basic questions, points towards an account of how to lead a satisfactory and purposeful life filled with coherent and meaningful experiences. I claim that the seeds of these experiences are woven into the dense tissue of lived environments to a much larger extent than is previously understood. Following this thought, everyday aesthetics can be seen to be linked to a certain design ethos, which is linked further to ideals of functionality and sustainability. The somewhat competing idea of design as ornamenting the everyday and reinventing itself every season according to a need dictated by market forces is less coherently paired with the environmentally conscious notion of everyday aesthetics. Yet aesthetics is still very often first thought of as considering only the surface, of somehow promoting an unsustainable culture of collecting continuously new titillating experiences and getting bored with the old ones. This calls for a reevaluation of the tools offered by different design practices together with a comprehensive understanding of the features that constitute a good life and as wide a range of well-being as possible.

On a wider note, the cultivation of relational capacities such as friendship, love, and neighbourhood and prosocial qualities related to these interrelations, such as compassion, empathy, care, and creativity are necessary in order that both individuals and communities reach their best quality. Not only knowledge but also skills to adapt and apply knowledge, and expand and interpret one’s experiential horizon become important in this sense. Among these skills the cultivation of aesthetic sensitivity comes into the equation when assessing the relation one has with different environments.

It becomes a determining factor whether one literally has the space needed in order to make decisions concerning these areas of life and to follow the results of these decisions. The spatio-relational mode of experience is not to be taken only as complementary but even as formative in accessing the sphere of the aesthetic.
Environments either encourage or repress these processes. Thus, it becomes easier to understand what Berleant is aiming at when he claims that environmental aesthetics “is no illusory escape from the moral realm but ultimately becomes its guide and its fulfilment”.

The democratisation process of aesthetics also requires instilling a wider and more explicitly global perspective on the possibilities of application of aesthetics as a discipline. Taking into account other than Western notions of “the beautiful” or “art”, the environment seems a logical choice since its appreciation is surprisingly common among different cultures around the globe. The environment has also traditionally been something in which everyone can afford to find joy and delight. According to this line of thought, even if confined to the most minimalistic and insufficient conditions, one does not need a special space dedicated to art or an Internet connection in order to have the opportunity to cultivate aesthetic sensibilities. It seems reasonable to be reminded of this more often. However, having the very basic needs fulfilled and a sufficient level of safety and comfort are still most often required before one can actually reach a state where engaging aesthetically with one’s environment is even remotely possible. Mental or physical distress does not support the aesthetic, even though aesthetic potentiality can still be acknowledged. This acknowledgment in itself can already become a support in a self-sustaining process of developing individual or collective skills and both inborn capacities and acquired abilities.

Yet for many, even in most distressing situations, the beauty of nature, for example, offers comfort, solace, as well as multi-layered pleasure. Beauty in itself is often considered to be a sign of life, having some meaning that surpasses distressing or otherwise untenable conditions. If religious interpretations are excluded, this meaningfulness is the very basis of the experience of aesthetic engagement. These phenomena cannot be understood by a behavioural explanation of psychology because the meaning of life and aesthetic pleasure do not always become manifested in behaviour and are definitely not easy to articulate by an individual. Learning to use one’s sensory apparatus together with the cultivation

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of aesthetic sensibilities with regard to the variety of direction of experiences is ultimately a matter of education, and aesthetic education in particular.

The exquisite aesthetic highlights of life are at best truly powerful and life-enriching, but they function strongly from the basis of and in relation to those more mundane experiences that reflect and mould one’s sensitivities on a daily basis. The aesthetic embedded in the everyday life is able to testify on a sustainable basis to human beings’ capabilities to express an understanding of the profound dignity of life and give meaning to it.
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