TEACHING ETHICS FOR URBAN PLANNERS AND ARCHITECTS

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ABSTRACT

The social tissue of city public spaces is a very delicate and complicated matter. It should not only provide citizens with physical security but also make it possible for them to have privacy whenever they wish it. At the same time properly planned public spaces with its adjacent facilities should create and support social bonds with other people. The current methods of planning public spaces do not seem to consider expectations formed in this way. At best, designers try to form social communities "by force". Within the public space special places (objects) are constructed which are assumed to help integrate the community but unfortunately very rarely succeed in achieving this goal. The complexity and dynamics of social interrelations make planning ahead for the future decades very difficult. Moreover, the social aspects of planning for a city's communication infrastructure come under three main topics closely connected with what one can call human well being: public security, multi functional design and human design. The proposed approaches do not allow for sufficient analysis of the broad range of psychological aspects of urban planning, and in particular its effect on persons' identification with their neighborhood and their relationships with others. Both aspects are very closely related to one's ethical values and activity.

Everyday urban and architectural planning practices are reflected in the way it is taught. Ethical questions concerning responsibility for others are usually neglected in education on ethics. Major emphasis is placed on various professional codes of ethics, which do not seem helpful in affecting students' ways of thinking and acting in their profession.

The main goal of the paper is to describe the current situation on the ethical aspects of teaching and practicing urban planning and architecture and to discuss ways in which students can be made conscious of important ethical issues relating to urban planning and increase their sensitivity to ethical values associated with this process.

Keywords: Urban planning, ethics, codes of ethics, ethical education

STREETS AND PUBLIC SPACES AS A DETERMINANT OF HUMAN WELFARE IN CITIES

The street is typically considered the fundamental part of a city's communication infrastructure. However, rather rarely is it perceived as the most essential element of public space, a kind of extension from private to public space where we actually leave the intimacy of our home and enter a much less intimate element, full of threats which will surely bring about meeting the Levinas' Other [1] with all of its attendant risks, efforts and potential responsibilities. Moreover, the street is this element of the outside world which we safely observe from our home through the window, and the consequence of these observations can strongly affect our will to engage in public life. Everyday experiences teach us to anticipate what we will see and what will happen, if we can we enjoy it, try to escape it or just stay neutral. The social tissue of the city street is a very delicate and complicated matter. It should not only provide us with physical security but also make it possible to keep our sense of privacy whenever we want to keep it. At the same time a properly planned street with its adjacent properties must not make it more difficult to create and support social bonds with other people. Then we can expect that individual inhabitants will form a real society which identifies with the part of the city they live in. The current methods of planning streets and adjacent properties do not seem to consider expectations formed in that way. At best the designers try to form social communities "by force". Within the public space there are special places (objects) which are assumed to help integrate the community and very rarely succeed in achieving this goal. Social reality is extremely complex and dynamic, and people rarely behave the way they are supposed to. It does not mean that there will be no planning at all; it rather suggests that planners should have more than one scenario and that much greater effort should be designated for the phase of preliminary planning with representatives of many

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professions, whose knowledge can enable more accurate predictions of what may happen in the next 10 or 30 years.

Any forecasts here are more difficult, since there are several types of roads in a city which traditionally play various roles in that city's social functioning. Some streets, for example, are not large in size, and have a strictly local character, mainly serving people living in the closest neighborhood. They are typically located beyond city centers, frequently in suburbs, and have little traffic. A quite different role is played by roads with similar dimensions located in significant places of the city (shopping, cultural and business centers). They are often very crowded with people, and sometimes (if not forbidden) with heavy traffic. People from outside dominate the social life of the street. It may be that both road types qualify as residential ones, but they obviously play completely different social roles-- a dissimilarity which should affect their design.

Recent trends in architecture and urbanity seriously threaten interpersonal relationships within communities. It has become very rare to plan and design rural or urban areas with special spaces which could serve to improve interpersonal relations, in which people could meet to discuss various solutions, exchange ideas, argue and reach a consensus.

As it was put by Bauman ([2], p. 33),

"The areas where people meet each other makes the space in which the norms are established (...). The area deprived of public space makes it difficult to discuss potential norms, to confront ideas, to clash with values, and to enter into their final negotiation".

In the following attempt to analyze the effect of new tendencies in architecture and urbanity on the process of forming links among people, Richard Sennett ([2], p. 57) concludes that

„Ideally designed, modern utopian space is for development of human responsibility (…) for any ethical action in human interrelationships, the infertile if not poisoned soil".

It can be stated further that the right ethical choices which meet the challenges of the 21st Century can be done by persons who are not deprived of the capacities of perceiving harmony, beauty and goodness--which is possible only if they have have not loste their link with nature [3]. Many philosophers and theoreticians of architecture and urban planning assume that there is a very strong correlation, if not identity, between ethics and aesthetics.

"Our aesthetic understanding of the street embraces a relation between interior and exterior, between content and façade. Here we see buildings, as we see people, with both a public and private side. There is part which faces outward to the world, and there is the part within, the domestic, private, idiosyncratic part (…) In all cases the street must reflect the desire for a common public order, the façade being a recognition of that order (…). These thoughts must lead us to perceive one further aspect in which style is necessary. For the public order which we have described is not given: it is an achievement, an achievement which depends on being recognized. There is no public order until men can see it. But this recognition, because it must take place daily and hourly, during the course of a busy and distracted commerce, will

necessitate something like the repeatable vocabulary, recognizable forms, interesting detail. (…) The moral task which we have elicited from our 'aesthetics of everyday life' cannot be fulfilled by any lapse into originality, into the pursuit of the 'enveloping experience' that is so often proposed as the only serious ideal of art. Self-expression is no more than the attempt of individualism to perpetuate itself in the aesthetic sphere (…) The architect must be constrained by a rule of obedience. He must translate his intuition into terms that are publicly intelligible, unite his building with an order that is recognizable not only to the expert but also to the ordinary uneducated man" ([4], 249-250).

With so many social and ethical dilemmas that we face in the development of contemporary cities, we continue to neglect their presence, in the professional practice of urban planning and construction. It has been neglected even in the most recent visions for future improvements:
In the recently prepared NR2C New Road Construction Concept Work Package 0 – Development of New Concepts for the Road of the Future. Vision 2040, the key social issues for the development of communications infrastructure of the city in 2040 [5] are

- **Public security –** Design and configure infrastructure and public spaces which are well-organized and recognizable in order to inspire confidence of the potential users. Develop driver supporting vehicles and infrastructure to minimise the impact of driver errors e.g. with the help of guiding and warning systems. Design more direct and separated connections for the most vulnerable road users in particular pedestrians and cyclists (stimulate walking and cycling). Design urban infrastructure that will reduce the impact of traffic (noise, pollution and vibration);
- **Multi-functional use –** Conquer and exploit the third dimension of public spaces by means of underground building or creating an artificial ground floor level. Design aesthetical infrastructure that fits in its environment. Use streets differentiated in time to facilitate exploitation and maintenance. Reshape monotone office and industrial areas into multi-usable public space;
- **Human design –** Design and tune the dimensions of infrastructure and the built environment in accordance with its main users. Reducing traffic needs by designing compact cities.

No ethical questions are mentioned. The authors' technocratic approach in Vision 2040 has been well demonstrated despite the commonly used book-term "Human Infrastructure", which seems to be very distant from any ethical and social considerations.

TEACHING ETHICS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL CODES OF ETHICS

There are codes of professional ethics which try to put some standards of ethical design into planning and constructing a built environment.
The 2004 American Institute of Architects Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct [6] encompasses five Canons

understood as broad principles of conduct. Only the first of them, General Obligations, only mentions broad ethical values. The full content of General Obligations: "Members should maintain and advance their knowledge of the art and science of architecture, respect the body of architectural accomplishment, contribute to its growth, thoughtfully consider the social and environmental impact of their professional activities, and exercise learned and uncompromised professional judgment". Only part of the above statement: "thoughtfully consider the social and environmental impact of their professional activities" goes beyond ethical consideration strictly connected with Professional Conduct. The remaining four Canons [6]:

- Obligations to the Public;
- Obligations to the Client;
- Obligations to the Profession;
- Obligations to Colleagues.

have so many sub-subjects of obligations that they automatically put many, often mutually inconsistent requirements on architects.

As it was put by architect Henry Cobb in ([7], p. 9): "I cannot recall a single commission undertaken by my firm in the past thirty years that has not required us to make difficult choices concerning how and to whom we render our professional services and how and to whom the intended building will make itself useful. These choices are difficult because the numerous constituencies whom we, as a matter of professional responsibility, see ourselves as serving--the client institution, the building's users, its neighbors, and so on--these diverse constituencies are often fiercely committed to widely divergent and deeply conflicting principles of human duty."

Such an ethical code seems more to remind architects to whom they should be loyal and which interests should be taken into account in the environment planning and construction process than to engage them in moral thinking, which brings them to choose between "good" and "bad".

According to another Professional Code of Ethics issued in 1997 by the American Society of Civil Engineers Fundamental Principles [8]:

Engineers uphold and advance the integrity, honor and dignity of the engineering profession by:

- Using their knowledge and skill for the enhancement of human welfare and the environment;
- Being honest and impartial and serving with fidelity the public, their employers and clients;
- Striving to increase the competence and prestige of the engineering profession; and
- Supporting the professional and technical societies of their disciplines.

The first principle is closely connected with carrying out the deepest social values. Enhancing human welfare can be understood as striving to keep people healthy, both physically and mentally as well as providing conditions for best personal development. It can be also understood as the general care of social development from the local to the global level The societies we are concerned about in this Code are not limited locally, regionally, nationally, even globally. Our concern is also extended to future generations. Actually, taking into

consideration all conditions resulting from such broadly understood human and social welfare is extremely complex and difficult and simply impossible without strictly considering moral or ethical values.

The second principle relates mainly to loyalty questions of engineers, and the third and fourth one come down to enhancing the role of ASCE among engineers and building its prestige in society.

There is another problem connected with introducing professional codes of ethics:

"An ethical code that strives for a universal morality can also contribute to the undermining of our individual moral responsibility, as the subjective moral impulse will suffocate if we are to rely exclusively on systems to bear of the moral criteria of our actions". (Zygmunt Bauman in ([9], p. 76)

EDUCATION ON ETHICS

The common approach used in morality education is based on direct knowledge transfer. This focuses on teaching ethical theories and principles, presenting codes of ethics, and training individuals to have the ability to reason and argue. Students are taught to form moral judgments in a way that is similar to how they are taught to reach scientific conclusions [10]. Such an approach seems to be well justified when the main goal of teaching is "to provide the students with the ability to analyze ethical and value-related controversies…whether those controversies are between lay people/public and experts or are controversies among the experts" ([11], p. 81.)

An important challenge then for education is how to teach the analysis of controversies from the various perspectives that reflect different or what can even be opposite points of view. For such education to be possible, there must already be present in the student some degree of the ability to sympathise with and respect other individuals or social groups for the teaching to be expanded upon.

Such teaching should help:

- Make students aware that they live together with others;
- Enhance their responsibility;
- Bring to their attention the importance of cooperation and negotiation;
- And encourage their ability to reach a consensus in all areas of their social life.

Another important issue is that one's ethical view, particularly if it addresses such subjective issues like the individual's attitude to nature, may be more emotive than cognitive. Doing something because it "feels right" emphasises the importance of considering emotional intelligence when making decisions related to the environment [12]. The combination of the rational and affective approach that comes from scientific knowledge with compassionate understanding is considered a crucial step in developing a deep green ethic [13].

Traditional academic events, like lectures, workshops, and working projects, deal with topics that are not morally neutral. A person conducting or instructing at such events must not include his or her moral assessment of the topic, since like any other person she or he has a personal world

view, convictions, preferences, and stereotypes; which probably make themunable to remain fully objective about the moral dilemmas being considered. Some values are commonly recognized as being universal; there is, however, a strong tendency for some biased explanations to overuse them. The instructor's task should be limited to emphasising the moral dimensions of the issues being analysed when they are not noticed. In this case the instructor should provide students with morally relevant data both *for* and *against* the choices that are the subject of controversy, raise questions about possible solutions, and encourage students to actively engage in discussion as well as provoke them to deep reflection. There is evidence that the more people there are participating in the construction of knowledge, the more likely they are to trust that knowledge (14, 15).

It is a frequent assumption that education to produce a change in understanding and action is simply a cognitive process. Actually, it is difficult to expect significant changes in societal behaviour when the only educational strategy is the transfer of knowledge. A person's awareness of an idea, like the belief that wasteful exploitation of natural resources is related to growing over-consumption and therefore detrimental to sustaining human life on Earth, is not sufficient to significantly change one's lifestyle [16, 17, 18]. People are actually very indecisive if they are not confronted by the real implications of their actions. Thus, raising the public's awareness and "working the case through" is not enough, if it is only successful in changing attitudes, especially if these changes in attitude are not followed by changes in action [19]. Any educational efforts used to advance the change to a sustainable lifestyle need to be reinforced through socialisation and attachment theory, to produce habitualisation, if such a lifestyle is to be successfully encouraged [20].

Practicing what is taught or advocated through a "whole institution approach" that goes beyond traditional knowledge transfer to include the applied use of the principles being taught in all aspects of an institution's operations, which are relative to the principles, thus provides the necessary component of "teaching by example." This approach, which combines the rational, emotional, and practical, and evaluates the resulting triad is the most logical educational model currently available for successful education to sustainable lifestyles [21]. A whole institution approach to teaching ethics should be implemented at both the organisation and the community levels [15].

One of the most important educational goals at the community level should be training to create and further enhance interpersonal links based on shared goals, full confidence, and responsibility. There is probably nothing else that would affect the formation of a democracy as much. Simplifying and decreasing the number of informal social arrangements should help bring about a citizen's responsibility. In thinking about active citizenship and the role of authentic participation, the understanding of how education, in its broadest sense, can be made more effective in achieving the goal for sustained changes in values and actions at individual and community levels should be strengthened. Research in this area [22] identifies that if education is to bring about change it needs to be authentic,

real, and participatory. The current agenda in the European Union's nation-states that proposes a type of "citizenship education" raises the question of how adults are to be drawn in to learning about, through, and for active citizenship in Europe. In the absence of any significant community-focused formal or informal learning opportunities for adults, the use of students of all ages and specialised workers in small businesses to act as educators seems to be an attractive proposition that is also in the context of sustainable development [15]. As the concept of the "whole institution approach" is relatively unfamiliar to the traditional business world, the focus in industry and commerce might be on providing information related to integrating corporate social responsibility into business practices; this approach is possible if such responsibility is viewed from a perspective that considers all aspects of the life cycle of an institution's products or services.

The basic dilemmas of education in ethics remain:

- Can ethics be effectively taught, or will any efforts at teaching ethics in the end not significantly affect any inherited moral values?
- What could be taught?
  - Can teaching raise people's awareness of ethical issues and make them more sensitive? or
  - Can it shape and change attitudes and affect people's behaviour? or
  - Can it only teach regulations?
- Can ethical knowledge transfer effectively into ethical action?
- Can ethically driven actions be used effectively in teaching ethics?

In general, morality education should be considered an essential tool in raising people's awareness and sensitivity to moral values and enhancing their independent thinking. An exception to this is the education of professionals who are to be specially trained to use their skills in reasoning and arguing on ethical values to aid in finding a consensus between all parties involved in a decision.

CURRICULA ON ETHICAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION ON URBAN PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

The quality of the information, instruction, and sources used to promote knowledge are essential for the accurate and effective presentation of environmental issues. M. Rickinson's review of the research on primary and secondary school environmental education [17] reveals low levels of factual knowledge and understanding of environmental issues, which persist or even decline through time. His review also reveals that schools and the media are the main sources of primary and secondary school students' environmental information, with their families as a third important source. However, schools and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) are regarded as the most reliable information sources. It can be assumed that the

above observations can be as well related to "built" and "social" environments in urban areas.

It seems therefore crucial to develop an outline of curricula and learning activities that challenge human beliefs relative to these kinds of issues. In doing so, this should enhance a student's sensitivity to ethical values and enable their active participation in solving real life ethical issues. What seems to be the most difficult is to affect people's sensitivity to value-related issues. A type of sensitivity training can be done. Using a phenomenological approach, an assessment of the students can be made, based on how they perceive the main constituents of urban places, such as streets, public spaces, buildings or other people. It is usually said that natural scientists view their surroundings in an instrumental and objectified way, this in order to be able to analyze things as objectively and with as little bias as possible. However, when there is an inherent ethical dimension to an object, an ethical view needs to be developed instead. A student needs to become aware of the needs of the entity/object and should ask themselves how these needs can be accommodated. A sense of care should then replace utilitarian calculations [23]. The results of ethical teaching need to be evaluated. To be aware of ethical principles is not the same as actually acting on them. There seems to be an unfortunate gap between people's perceived ethical ideals and their actions. Sometimes people are even unaware of this gap between their own ideals and their actual decisions. It has been argued that people very often fail to make ethical decisions, despite ethical education and training, and that their own assessment of their success does not match the actual outcome [23].

The instruments for curricula in environmental ethics could include :

- *Tools for raising awareness of ethical issues and for making students more sensitive to ethical aspects of urban developments;*
- Tools for building "ethical standards", identifying "ethical dimensions" and coming to "ethical choices";
- Case studies, which optimise students' active participation and enhance their emotional engagement in presented attitudes;
- Introducing the whole institution approach to teaching ethics related to education on planning and constructing a built environment;
- A mentor scheme for training young staff in developing awareness of ethical issues.

The main teaching objectives should be:

- To make students conscious of important ethical issues related to technological developments and increase their sensitivity to ethical values
- To enable students to integrate the ethical aspects of technological developments with their environmental impacts;
- To enhance public awareness of the detrimental consequences and effects that wasteful exploitation may have on the future of those living now and on future unborn generations.

To achieve these objectives it will be necessary:

- To recognize the social, moral, cultural, and economic diversity of urban landscapes as well as to look for efficient ways to integrate their most important aspects in one area;
- To recognize social perceptions and consciousness of ethical dimensions in social and environmental issues which may affect process of forming the urban area;
- To recognize the basic values, how they evolve, and how they influence a citizen's behaviour;
- To find out what the role is of education in building ethical standards and to what extent changing these ethical standards can be reflected in people's actions;
- To find out to what extent these issues are reflected in existing curricula or courses;
- To identify efficient ways of making people sensitive to value-related issues; and
- To identify or develop new methods of education, which in strengthening the relationship between values/attitudes and action would tend to increase the level of social activity.

There are some additional questions which can affect social and environmental implications of future urban development, which should be considered in an early phase of its planning, and which should be a subject for teaching students. The most important among these subjects are the following topics:

- Professions which should participate in the process of urban planning, design and construction (civil engineers, architects, urban planners, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, semiologists, historians, etc. ?);
- What do we have in mind when we talk about sustainability in regard to the design of civil infrastructures? Should we see to it that designed structures be functional and cheap, durable, energy-saving, economical during construction, not harmful to the environment, aesthetical, integrated to the environment, in line with local historical traditions, culture and society, helpful in building and keeping close social relations between people or development of a person's personality? (it seems obvious that close social relationships, affected by evolution, are crucial here since they condition human psychical health and everyday life qualities for both contemporary and future generations.);
- Loyalty of urban planners, architects, civil engineers: (to their investors, the users of the structures, people living near or far from these structures, society as a whole, and to their colleagues?);
- The degree to which local communities participate in ventures totally restricted to their regions and those ventures that have a wider reach.

CONCLUSION

Probably the most important educational challenge now is how to change today's education to be an essential tool for raising people's awareness and sensitivity to moral values, enhancing their independent thinking, and making informed ethical choice the standard when analysing controversies. To achieve these goals new educational approaches and methods should be implemented that account for the entire complexity of human perception, thinking, and acting when considering the complex interdependence of human relationships with both the built environment in which persons live and with those persons they meet in their everyday life.

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