



New Peace Architecture

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ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach to peace by involving diverse thinkers' creativity, knowledge, and the arts co-production process in the practice of science itself. It is an attempt to blend theory and practice together for a better understanding and addressing the under studied gap between macro level planning, decision making and the micro ground level work done and impact within the field of peace, sustainability and architecture. The article introduces a new transformative approach, New Peace Architecture and Peace building, through three case studies that brings concepts of sustainability and peace together which no longer bifurcates between human, non-human, living and non-living organisms in the practice of everyday building. In this transformative approach towards an open society aims to address intercultural and interreligious dialogue on the axis of a sustainable and just future, to strengthen women, to change consumption behaviours accordingly, to organise unusual collaborations between diverse actors, to implement nonviolent sustainable and just ideas in the city.

Keywords: Transformation, peace, justice, sustainability, peace architecture, urban, nature-based solutions, art, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, architecture, social innovation

There can be no durable peace if the natural resources that sustain livelihoods and ecosystems are destroyed. According to UN, over the last 60 years, at least 40% of all internal conflicts have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources. Environmental degradation impacts the poorer, more vulnerable communities, fuelling larger systemic crises. The transformative power of cities is key, but this can't be executed without recognizing that cities are shared spaces with people from a variety of cultures. It is important to reach the veins of society during the New Peace Architecture.

This needs a call for a New Peace-building process. In this transformative approach towards an open society aims to address intercultural and interreligious dialogue on the axis of a sustainable

and just future, to strengthen women, to change consumption behaviours accordingly, to organise unusual collaborations between diverse actors, to implement nonviolent sustainable and just ideas in the city.

New Peace Architecture redefines the meaning of sustainability and peace-building processes which no longer bifurcates between human and non-human, living organisms and the non-living. Peace architecture or architecture of peace is often still limited to human oriented peace structures like memorials, peace *stupas* and religious/spiritual

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concepts. New Peace Architecture goes beyond such constructions while equally valuing and acknowledging the need for the same.

Peace-building is defined here as taking alternative actions on social inequality and ecological unsustainability in order to create more just and sustainable spaces. A narrow version of the peace-building term has begun to appear within the bodies of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, other regional actors, the international legal system, and the international financial institutions.

Transformative Peace Science definition is firstly introduced by peace worker Burcu Eke Schneider at Humboldt University, Urban Sociology Conference in 2022. She collects data from real-world and initiated the Peacebuilding process by contacting variety of actors in an urban environment. This local-level peace work which includes public and private interventions, is related to “Open Spaces” approach which has been implemented in 2020 at Wuppertal’s real-utopia, Germany. The idea is to focus on building relationships that collectively form new patterns, processes and structures which can play a constructive role. This includes New Open Spaces and ideas is not only about physical open spaces and biodiversity protection initiatives, but changes in gender-equality, decision-making processes to include marginalized groups, trust-building and social justice to promote intensive growth patterns that ensure micro -individual- and local level sustainable and just structural changes for a common future.

In this process the Transformative Peace Science can contribute with its data obtained by the help of transdisciplinary (non-academic) and interdisciplinary (knowledge sharing) approaches in order to establish dialogue between vulnerable and marginalized groups and other actors in the city. But there are main challenges which need to be addressed.

First one is the difficulty of incorporating marginalized groups into knowledge production processes. Many generations will feel the impact of such deficiency in the long term, as urban

transformation cannot take place where only a certain group decides and other more vulnerable, groups are excluded from the process. For example, a group that feels excluded has a higher tendency to resort to violence (Smart Richman, 2009).

Second one is, internal conflicts due to gender inequality. Thinking innovatively at the intersection of gender equality is priceless for social innovation, because many control mechanisms such as clothing, social interaction, freedom of movement, education, work and marriage prevent women from proving their existence. The birth of potential ideas at the micro- (individual) and local level of peace-building is thus prevented. This can only be made possible if the male-dominated decision-making structures are made to open new spaces for women – especially for the representatives of marginalized groups. Furthermore, decision makers are often more interested in macro-level issues. In this regard, small-scale and locally-designed solutions often get lost in the noise. In general, there is little interest in analyzing and resolving the root causes of social injustices in the cities. According to Ecocity World Summit held between the 22nd and 24th of February 2022, data indicates that the people living in the greener areas of the cities live eight years longer than the people living in the less green of urban spaces. Those in inner urban areas are mostly representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups. As Johan Galtung says, “thus, ecological imbalance is seen as something deeper than simply a threat to the satisfaction of basic needs. It is also a threat to something deeply spiritual, severing ties to the basis in basic needs” (Galtung Johan, 1958). Furthermore, sustainability projects are also carried out politically, financially, etc. by the Western, educated, white and upper middle-class local groups, which are concentrated mostly on high-tech energy transitions or Utopian ideas. However, in fact, it will be the marginalised groups who are most affected by the ecological transformation in their homes and workplaces.

In this sense; we need a New Peace Architecture thought which redefines the meaning of sustainability and peace-building processes which

no longer bifurcates between human and non-human, living organisms and the non-living.



Fig. 1

Peace architecture or architecture of peace is often still limited to human oriented peace structures like memorials, peace stupas and religious/spiritual concepts. New Peace Architecture goes beyond such constructions while equally valuing and acknowledging the need for the same. It urges us to apply the two concepts of peace and sustainability together within the construction and design process of everyday architecture like housing, schools, and various open spaces and gardens that bring people together, addressing the notion that one is not complete without the other. Three such case studies that fall under such notion will be discussed in the article further.

Aranya Low-Cost Housing Complex, Indor, India design by B.V. Doshi

The Aranya Low-cost Housing complex design and constructed in Indor was developed by Vastu Shilp Foundation under the guidance of architect Balkrishna Doshi in 1989. The site in Aranya neighbourhood consists of 85 hectares on which

6500 dwellings were to be built. Before the project approximately 51000 people lived in informal or illegal settlements⁴. The successive failures of previous projects were because of the impossibility of completion of construction due to lack of funding and low purchasing power amongst the individual families. This made it impossible to build proper houses no matter how cheap it was. Therefore, the main need of the project was to develop housing with scarce economic and material resources in context to social vulnerability.⁵

Aranya Low-cost Housing is an article in Urban infrastructure curated by *Hidden Architecture*

Hidden Architecture was created in February 2015 between Madrid and Liverpool by Alberto Martínez García and Héctor Rivera Bajo. The journal aims to create an atlas of architecture, parallel to the pro-official in order to replicate the discourse and the well-accepted understanding of historiography of architecture built up by themselves. Our project pursues the construction of an atlas of architecture, parallel to the official one, that comes to replicate the discourses and the understanding of the architectural historiography that they themselves construct. Hidden Architecture is resistance, an attempt to make visible the difference in architectural practice and provide a deserved value to certain projects and concepts subtracted from the academic narrative. *Hidden Architecture* resistance, an attempt to make visible the difference in architectural practice, to provide certain works, subtracted from the academic narrative, with the value they deserve.

The limitations of the context urged the team to look at the idea of housing not just as a finished project but as a long term and constant process of habitation. The plan was to construct housing for two income groups deep rooted in the notion of self-sustenance and community. The approach kept a sensitive attention to not create a gap between the architect and the dwellers but rather attempted to break this dichotomy by not dismantling and re-housing but through improving the living the

standard of the substandard informal and illegal settlement through construction. The approach resisted displacement and dislocation of the already existing population encouraging them to become a part of the construction process through self-participation in the construction process.

Local materials were used from the surrounding context and neighbourhood with a structural focus on load bearing walls. Keeping in mind the idea of housing as a process of habitation, the architect instead of developing a closed plan prepared different layouts and infrastructural elements for small and diverse family groups which could be personalised and customised for potential future development as a need for an extension within the houses in time, as the families grew, and material resources around increased. The design and construction focused on rehabilitation and empowering the local practices and the existing urban fabric by giving open spaces of interaction to sustain such activities.

The layout of the housing was based on small to large hierarchical open spaces and courtyards that would be shared by multiple families creating an ecosystem of vigilance, dependency, and collective nature of the neighbourhood. A social life that manifests itself in great intensity through and in the common space of settlement. The domestic units built slowly and over time with the need and availability of resources. Reused and recycled materials were used along with improvised use of vegetation, for example shrubs were placed at the entrance, tall trees were used in the courtyard to shade the courtyards during the warm summer days creating a space for socialisation. Various other local herbs and plants were planted in the open spaces to engage the sociability practice with practices of gardening. Today Aranya Low-cost society housing a population of 80,000 is a success and has evolved in its structure as a living thriving organism and continues to do so without becoming a burden to the population density on the land with the layout accommodating the future development within the existing design. This case study, although not built as a peace architecture displays the principals of New Peace Architecture

as it shows an engagement of sustainability and sociability through local participation and design together. Instead of applying a top-down model the process of design itself engaged with creating a balance between available resources, the needs to be covered and the material evolution of the domestic environment offering a habitat that is synchronised with the very evolution and nature of the group of living and non-living beings that is nature of habitation.

The Green School, Bali, Indonesia

For truly transformative changes in aspects of schools and education for a better sustainable living and restructuring on the macro level to happen, one must focus on both the design and the pedagogic pattern for the future torch bearers. An example of such setting is Cynthia & John Hardy's Green School in Bali (Indonesia). Founded in 2008, the school focuses its vision on empowering the global citizens & green innovators who are inspired to take responsibility for the sustainability of the world⁶.

The 250 students are subjected to a holistic learning environment through cultivating physical sensibilities and interdisciplinary learning integrating practical, artistic & conceptual elements. According to John Hardy, the distinctive intention is achieved by a combination of the physical environment (man-made structure in a natural setting) and a curriculum, in addition to the conventional academic learning, focuses on not only the children but also parents learning by working with the ecological conditions.

The buildings are made of Bamboo and are spread across 8 hectares of green land near a rural setting. A river in the deep ravine divides it into half with school buildings on the west side and the bamboo village, kitchen, gardens & bamboo factory-where all the building material and furniture are produced lie in the east wing.

All the buildings, especially 'Heart of School, are designed on passive architectural climatology principles. The local tropical climate gives rise to the need for double height roofs, dramatic skylight allowing the diffused light to enter, though they do

not feel intimidating as the vertical axis is broken by cold friendly details such as “Heart of the Heart” hiding place, hanging baskets and such. The walls are made permeable accommodating free flow of air and a seamless visual interaction with the green elements of the nature. The interventions witnessed a behavioural change in participants. Parents reported that their children developed a healthier and more balanced lifestyle and were calmer and more peaceful.

A sense of community is said to have developed from framing activities such as growing rice and chocolate that resulted in increased interactivity and appreciation for different cultures. One of the parents, who locally sourced coffee beans, roasted them by hand and started a company called ‘Freak’- also serving in the school dining area- converting this into a class sparked awareness and importance of local businesses.

All this can be summarised onto what the members of the school call ‘The Green School Effect’ –

- ⊙ place & space environment
- ⊙ teaching & learning
- ⊙ future leaders in global sustainability.

The school maybe situated in one small part of the world but the message and & learning is spreading beyond the premises & across continents. A student who was there for just a term went back to a quaker school in Rhode Island and started a revolution by creating the first compost in her school. Another effect seen was in how bamboo was perceived as a poor person’s building material in the region. The development of aesthetically sound architecture questions the hesitation in usage of vernacular materials and is a huge step towards reincorporating such practices which would otherwise be deemed as archaic or something that is synonymous to a low-income lifestyle.

The Swamp Pavilion

Swamp Pavilion La Biennale de Venezia imaginative exercise plays with the hard lines of land commodification and national territory. The only suggestive mode of growth for the Venice Biennale

-now built to its limits- is a triangular patch of water which was originally a marshland. This ecological setting of neither land or water gave a perfect opportunity for as Lithuania’s first individual pavilion to mark the radical instability and threats of war and environmental collapse and acts as provocation regarding the expansion of national territories within Biennale’s international context.

The Swamp Pavilion on www.swamp.it visited on 19th November, 2022

Shruti Malik is a researcher at GraKo Practicing Place at KU Eichstätt, in the field of Urban Ethnography and Sociology, on Guided walking Tours as a practice of Place suggests and has written the three case studies to discuss New Peace Architecture.

Constructive Ecological Thinking is a way of constructive resistance for Nonviolent Action. As stated in Gandhi’s second level hypotheses: “In a group struggle you can keep the goal-directed motivation and the ability to work efficiently for the realization of the goal stronger than the destructive, violent tendencies, and the tendencies to passiveness, despondency or destruction, only by making a constructive programme part of your total campaign and by giving all phases of your struggle, as far as possible, a positive character.”

The immateriality became the central point of reference for a chimera-like project having two identities. First being a human as representative of a particular nation and cohabiter with “nature” thus representing an inhabitant of the planet Earth.

The Swamp Pavilion curated by Nomeda and Gediminas Urbana’s and presented by the Lithuanian Council for culture, is an imaginary hybrid space for exercises in architectural, artistic practices, theory and pedagogy through form that led to public interventions, field trips, workshops. In concept it contradicts the global trend of toward mutating geo-politics and uncertain nation-state hegemony. The artists themselves participating possess idiosyncratic national identity. Furthermore, the increasing number of participant nations increases the fixed number if pavilions turn the desperate rental search by “non-owning pavilion

countries” into an astonishing temporary real estate market for Venetians. It claims to create a space where a person can come leaving the national identity outside and create neutral space for open casual discourse regarding the crisis mentioned above.

All these Shruti Malik’s three examples are part of constructive ecological method for group of thinkers, architects, transformers which helps to prevent violence, as it works with this idea, this tool can contribute by transforming the ecological movement and nonviolent actions into the idea of a New Peace Architecture process of resilience for marginalised groups.

Inclusiveness to help enable emergence of a common understanding in three main ways: Firstly, it supports inclusive processes of just transition that respects diversity of cultural backgrounds and ethnicity. Secondly, it promotes more “environmentally friendly” and sustainable behaviours and attitudes among participants. Thirdly, it conveys new meanings of collective struggle for a common future in different languages, cultures, and sacred places. Here, we can observe

how peace-building efforts contribute positively to social innovation and ecological transformation, and indicate that the behaviours and actions of the participants can change in a positive way. Still, it is not too late to set up safer spaces by the help of New Peace Architecture as an efficient way to facilitate access to knowledge for marginalized and vulnerable groups, like working class, indigenous people, farmers, migrants, women, children, persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community.

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