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**ROLE OF AESTHETICIZATION IN EXPERIENCE SOCIETY AND  
URBAN SPACE DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

The paper focuses on the role and influence of the aestheticization of everyday life on urban space development and transformation in which the leading role is devoted to such resource as culture. These transformations have great influence on individual's perception of reality which also has the tendency to undergo changes due to the new emerging reality. As in the last quarter of the XX century, the leisure civilization became the matter of the research; this stage in the development of civilization brings into people's minds the idea of choosing free time that radically changes our understanding of the essence of social time as a whole. Now researchers could see the direct dependence between quality free time of people and health and wellbeing improving. Proactively responding to this agenda provides an opportunity for the urban sector to position itself as a key part of the solution, helping to tackle unhealthy lifestyles, address the social determinants of health, offer cost effective approaches, bring creative solutions and engage communities, families and individuals in managing their wellbeing. The paper's main concern is the role of urban space development in this matter.

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**Keywords:** Aestheticization of everyday life; urban space development; wellbeing; creative industries; experience society; experience economy.

## 1. Introduction

According to many researchers, modern culture is characterized by presence of transformation processes. Currently, there is an urgent need for thorough investigation of the basis of these processes, their direction and development perspective with the insight into the aesthetic sphere involved in them. It

is recognized that daily life is being absorbed by aestheticization that acquires a universal character and penetrates in all spheres of our life. According to Shatunova (2008), aestheticization "... reaches such degree when it is natural to think about aesthetic as some universal basis, as texture of modern culture". Western and national philosophies rethink limits, subject and basic categories of aesthetics as a philosophic discipline. The term "universal aestheticization" is widely used in the contemporary philosophic and cultural discourse, foremost in application to the description of conditions in modern culture. "Universal aestheticization" implies such attitude to reality that makes the quality of exterior form dominating criteria in assessment outstripping the attention to the internal content. Such type of perception is typical to modern mass culture and addresses the deeper layers of consciousness completely rebuilding it according to the new character of perception. In this context aestheticization means acquiring aesthetic character by such spheres of our life which previously stayed away from the traditional aesthetics. Therefore, aestheticization process is expansion of aesthetic sphere and its transition to other areas of individual life such as science, production, religion, art. The set of expressive forms directly perceived by feelings appears to be aesthetic. It is sensually axiological nature of aesthetic that enables a person to estimate the reality. As a result, such human needs as the desire "to be happy", "to enjoy", "to live a gilded life" do not require any justification. They transform in demonstration of widely spread want to sensually percept reality as something aesthetic leading to emotional sufferings. In addition, the borders of aesthetic expectations are broadening which demands significant efforts to maintain them and create corresponding instruments to support them. In fact, we can observe the cultivation of consumption aesthetic culture.

### **1.1 Aestheticization of everyday life**

Transformation of sensual sphere of a modern person leads to the change in his behavior and interaction with reality which is characterized by shifting the emphasis from result to process. Simultaneously, the significance of individual being grows. According to Schulze (2005), the fundamental transformation of modern society in the emotional sphere is conditioned by the fact that the modern person as a consumer changes the character of his orientation from "external" which means consuming utilitarian products and services to "internal" which means emotional sufferings obtained when using purchased products and services. According to Schulze (2005), "the person himself launches the processes that proceed in him".

Aestheticization embraces practically all levels of human life beginning from daily life presented by aestheticized individual living environment and virtual reality life created by people in cyber space to participation in mass leisure activities such as mass performances and shows. Main aestheticization factors include globalization, urbanization, electronic media (informationalism), net societies. Modern scientific research works in cultural studies and philosophy exploit such term as "universal aestheticization" or "daily life aestheticization". The terms refer to the specific form of attitude to the reality when exterior qualities of objects dominate interior ones in the process of evaluation. Such way of perception is the key feature of mass culture, "consumer society", "experience economy" and "experience society".

## 1.2 Experience society

The notion “experience society” was introduced by Schulze (2005), German sociologist, in his work “Die Erlebnisgesellschaft». He speaks about the society where the most significant value is the possibility to experience different emotions and feelings the most important of which are aesthetic ones. Polish aesthetician Bogdan Dzemidok enumerates spheres and modes of postmodern daily life which incorporates all possible indicators of the aesthetic in daily life. Beauty contests, bodybuilders shows, tourism, sport shows, rituals, forms of popular culture, plastic surgery along with accommodation and production of consumer goods refer to the aesthetic (Leleco, 2002).

In the late 1990s – early 2000s, German philosopher Böhme developed the theory of “atmospheres” which goes beyond cognitive perception. According to the researcher’s approach, the aesthetic is criticism of judgment and theory of sensual cognition in a broad sense that can not be constricted to works of art. Böhme speaks about “new aesthetics” based on initial atmospheric experience in relation to object experience. Not only works of art but also material things possess their own specific aura constituting primary spatiality within which things are perceived. This aura (atmospheric) spatiality is connected with material qualities of things considered by Böhme as “ecstasy”: sensually perceived material features of things. This is not what things possess but what makes them irradiate outwardly. Consequently, artistic activity is regarded by Böhme as a form of “aesthetic work” aimed at “atmosphere creation” or aura (Böhme, 2001). An individual experiences feelings and emotions within time flow and a sequence of events which makes him perceive objects as cultural but not as utilitarian. Judgments generated by such experience are to a great extent personal but not universal. The individual has the desire to share his feelings and thoughts with other people, which in their turn increase the importance of intersubjective communication and understanding (Lash, 1999). Therefore, relationship between individuals becomes community oriented and the fundamental scheme of “subject-object interaction” transforms into the relationship between things and objects, people and things located at the same level or scheme where people do not dominate and control material world but participate and plunge into the atmosphere of objects configuration, into the “material environment”, “material culture”.

Emergence of environmental approach is motivated by criticism of technicist paradigm characterized by "still life" view of the city (city as a thing) and connected with the processes of emotionalisation and aestheticization of the urban space. Emotional “disobjectification” of the city and its perception as real imaginary whole was promoted by the development of the cinema and photography. This means that emotionalisation and aestheticization of the urban environment are directly connected with citizens’ visual imagination, magazine image of the city and its style of life. “City and all its elements has at last been perceived as a stage box for long lasting “happening” – daily life adopted primarily through aesthetic perception” (Giddens, 1990). Visual experience transformation has resulted in the change of city perception style. Following Eve Ellows, it is possible to define this phenomenon as a “therapeutically-emotional style” expressed in concepts of creative city theorists. In addition, this style is defined by Schulze (2005) as common tendencies to repetition and schematization observed in “episodes of daily life aesthetics” (Glasichev, 2007).

Over the past fifteen years, the theory of urban studies has come a long way towards recognizing the diversity and pluralism of urban life. Most prominent contemporary urbanists, including Manuel Castells,

David Harvey, Saskia Sassen, Richard Sennett, Mike Davis, recognize the inadequacy of the one-dimensional representation of the city. They point out to the imposition of productive activities on the new types of competent activities, also, to the co-presence of different classes, social groups, nations and cultures, to the stark contrast between wealth and luxury on the one hand and extreme poverty on the other, to the multiplicity of temporal and spatial parameters of different ways to the acquisition of livelihood in the city. Many industrial centers have been building a new image on a fundamentally different basis that is the development of creative industries. There are enough examples of this, such as UK cities like Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool, also Bilbao in Spain, the Ruhr region in Germany. Business recognizes that today much depends on creativity in its various manifestations. This encourages corporations to invest considerable amounts of money in culture. Cultural component is gaining more weight in the economy, determining the competitiveness of products, services and brands. Strategically, in modern post-information society, culture is becoming a priority because it has turned into a powerful industry in the sphere of culture. According to British experts, in the XX century, the income related to export of music in the UK exceeded the total revenue of the companies exporting mechanical engineering products and the automotive industry. The experience economy by leveraging cultural resources could develop successfully under such conditions where there are optimized resources, investment capital, and all these contribute to meeting of the demand of customers. Adequate technologies could appear in the space of "leisure civilization".

### **1.3 Culture-led urban regeneration**

As it has been already mentioned, leisure civilization as a phenomenon became the matter of research only in the last quarter of XX century. It should also be noted that this stage in the development of civilization brings into people's minds the idea of choosing free time that radically changes our understanding of the essence of social time as a whole. It's no doubt that there is a vital role for culture and leisure to play in improving the health and wellbeing of local communities. Proactively responding to this agenda provides an opportunity for the urban sector to position itself as a key part of the solution; helping to tackle unhealthy lifestyles, address the social determinants of health, offer cost effective approaches, bring creative solutions and engage communities, families and individuals in managing their wellbeing. The economies of most Western countries had the ability to develop actively similar types of industry. They made the transition to the post-labour type of society and managed to change the appearance of cities, get rid of industrial buildings that were disfiguring the face of the city, create new objects with new cultural infrastructure. This could happened due to many factors such as the migration of industry and employment, displacement of the middle class to the outskirts of cities, change in the working schedule, the emergence of large trading centers in the suburbs or on the outskirts of cities, growth in the number of vehicles per capita and as a result, the dependence on car travel.

The negative impact of these changes can also be traced to the less popular sparsely populated urban areas, which are usually abandoned by the authorities and are not paid much attention, and, as a consequence, the situation is usually aggravated by such social problems as unemployment, rising crime and poverty among the inhabitants of these areas. Research by Wilkinson (1996) shows that an increase in socio-economic inequalities in developed countries is associated with health inequality, which is likely to be detrimental to the well-being of individuals and communities. Cultural resource using by creative

industries has increased dramatically. To cope with this economic, social and environmental decline, urban authorities promote cultural policies with an initiative to upgrade the urban space, but mostly an economic discourse is implied. Authorities are seeking for the new development models, which would appeal to the market forces, i.e. businessmen and entrepreneurs, whose financial investments could help to refurbish urban centers that are undergoing recession in terms of the working time of residents and the rise in customer spending on entertainment.

Cultural heritage has also become an integral part of the creative industries and has been organically included in the new style of life. Ethnographic marketing and sociology of everyday life make it possible to study the needs of the people in the context of their daily lives, everyday social and cultural practices. Consumer personality is mainly studied in order to understand in what way individuals and their needs are related to social groups, communities in which they live and act. "Co-creation of the experience" forces manufacturers and tourism organizers to focus their research attention not on functionality and technology, but on everyday life, on the existence in the tourism network. The space of experience, in which an individual (consumer, tourist) occupies a central position, is of a great interest for the researchers of modern experience economy. This space is an event. The event happens in the context of space and time; it demonstrates the participation of the triggers of co-creation in the generation of experience. The new formula of co-creation has appeared: «Consumer to Consumer» (C2C). For many people in the developed world, the time spent in leisure and tourism has become an important part of their lives. In particular, people's free time is dedicated to finding new unique emotions and impressions (experiences) reflecting their own personal stories (Binkhorst, 2002).

## **2. Methods**

Culture with its values and importance is not only a generator for attracting attention to international business and tourism markets, but it also the means allowing the city to stand out in the global arena and at the same time to preserve its local identity (Evans, 2003). Therefore, it is a reasonable thematic basis for a city's image construction. In urban planning, where such intangible factors as attention, values and symbols play a very significant role, the implementation of a cultural project should not become an aim in itself, but it should be regarded as a consistent step in the strategy aimed at creating the image of a city having culture as a competitive strategy. It is the strategy where culture is seen as a "way of life", and cultural resources here include all aspects which contribute to the "space creation": tangible and intangible objects, such as art; cultural heritage; local festivals; local rituals; youth culture; ethnic minorities and communities; products and souvenirs; local crafts and skills; public spaces; architecture; image of the city, etc. Using art in public space is also very important. Enhancing the image of the downtown areas could be achieved by developing such public cultural events as street theatres, fairs, film screenings, street performances, street presentations, food festivals, etc. As a rule, they attract visitors and help to turn urban centers into lively and vibrant areas of a town. Cities aspiring to implement this strategy are to place culture at the heart of its development strategy and use culture as a measure of all aspects in urban planning (Bianchini, 1993). The growing use of art in public space in recent decades provokes rising interest in the positive outcomes it can contribute towards urban regeneration.

### **3. Results**

Following this, city officials turned to the field of culture that resulted in the emergence of a new term "Cultural investment", which becomes thus the "single currency". This term is used by the authorities, who seek to promote themselves as effective partners for the private sector. As a result, the policy has rooted that implies culture as a commodity, and the investment in it brings substantial dividends. Profit from investments in museums, theaters, city events, i.e., the so-called "creative industries" is expected in the form of monetary gain, jobs creation and spatial changes in the urban environment, and this policy has been successful in some way. However, critics attacked this cultural policy for its extremely economic orientation, being crude, contradictory and divisive, "a carnival mask" worn by the city center to meet the needs of the businesses or wealthy tourists (García, 2004), and under which the social deprivation of periphery is hidden, and the more "real" culture of the city inhabitants is obscured (Evans, 2003; Mooney, 2004).

It is vital for a cultural creative city to get a constant feedback from its citizens and have a comprehensive system for assessing their progress as it happens through organized community councils in many cities of Europe such as Unna, Middlesbrough, Bradford (UK), Helsinki (Finland), Quebec in Canada, etc. It helps to understand a city where it is now, decide on a future strategy and find new ways of dealing with current issues (Landry, & Bianchini, 1995).

### **4. Conclusion**

It can be concluded, that the aestheticization of everyday life permeates all spheres of an individual's existence. It changes and transforms the modern society and a person's perception of the world around. Such sphere as urban space is also responding to these changes; such aspect as culture starts to play an important role in urban space transformation attracting people to spend their time together, experience and share different emotions. Emotions and experience have become a commodity a person is ready to pay for. Moreover, individuals strive for new experiences; they are ready to participate in different performances, events, etc. Also, experience, happiness and well-being are now major concerns of researchers and policy makers; and research into lived experience, work, leisure, and enjoyment is central to our understanding of happiness and well-being. An overarching concern of researchers today is the interplay between individual and social factors in happiness and well-being, and the emphasis cannot be primarily on the importance and responsibility of the individual. Rather, to improve the conditions of individual lives and make a better society, it is crucial that people act collectively, attracting authorities, businesses and entrepreneurs to cities transformation.

Therefore, we can distinguish several issues to be taken into consideration in urban planning strategies. One of the critical issues is the ensuring the sustainability of capital investment and building schemes and long-term costs planning from the outset. Also, it is important to make sure that the community at all levels is involved in planning of a city's regeneration, and a top down approach to decision-making is avoided. One more important concern in that cultural investment should bring benefit for both local people and communities; such investment should improve their lives and surrounding environment as well excluding the risk of leaving some groups of people behind and leading to their deprivation. Finally,

investment in cultural regeneration of a city should be thoroughly assessed and measured in order to estimate its economic and regenerative impacts (Garcia, 2004).

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