BOOK REVIEW

Ethics, Design and Planning of the Built Environment

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In 'Ethics, Design and Planning of the Built Environment' sixteen researchers explore and discuss ethical issues in the professional field of architecture and urban design. The theme, the different approaches adopted and the insights provided make this a book to be commended to all those working or with an interest in the field of urban e-planning. It is organized into three parts, with four chapters each, and an afterword. In the first part, the book deals with rising ethical problems in this professional field, which is followed in the second section by an exploration of how ethical and planning paradigms evolve, and ending in the third part with the discussion of the new and emerging ethical approaches in planning and urban design.

In part 1 ('Rising problems') the book offers well informed discussions of four important problems in planning ethics, which are relevant for urban e-planning: how ethics and values differ in planning and design; the need to address community needs; the relevance of public space, and the relation between ethics and aesthetics in architecture and planning. Ernest R. Alexander discusses values in planning and design, offers an overview of this debate, including a discussion of how and why ethics and values differ in design and planning. Alexander ends his essay questioning if an integrated ethics is possible, arguing that such conceptual integrated structure seems infeasible. This is followed by the perspective put forward by Carol D. Barrett, based on her professional planning experiences, that "all the design professions should adopt detailed and specific policy on pro bono and other community service activities" (p. 39). In chapter 3, Stefano Moroni and Francesco Chiodelli discuss the relevance of public space for the public sphere, exploring two theses on public space. While the first of these main theses argues that there is not a necessary overlap between public space and the public sphere (p. 47), the second argues that a privatization process of public space is in

action, a perspective challenged by the authors. In fact, Moroni and Chiodelli propose instead that public space is not coincidental with the public sphere, in particular now when part of our daily interaction do not occur only in public spaces. In other words, what the authors show and argue is, first that if the rebuilding of the public sphere is an objective for urban policy intervention on public space it is not the only way to do it and probably not the best; and secondly, they show that privatization of the public space is not an inevitable process. This part ends with Stefan Koller questioning in chapter 4 if ethics in Architecture can or should be reduced to aesthetics and why architecture does not receive the ethical attention that he considers it deserves. In his approach, Koller challenges the view that ethics can only be applicable to architects and not to architecture ('buildings') and argues in favor of an ethics of architecture, a discussion that is also valid and relevant for planners and therefore for urban e-planning.

This is followed in part II ('Evolving paradigms') by lucid arguments in favor of the importance of including ethics as well as aesthetics, and its interrelationships, in Architecture, Design and Planning education and research. Lara Schrijver discusses the incorporation of ethical questions in design thinking arguing that in the domain of architecture it is necessary to ask which ethical considerations "belong to the work of the architecture, where in the process of designing and building do these considerations come into play, and how may we understand and approach them?" (p.80). These arguments in favor of a more important role for ethics in architecture education and research can and should be extended to urban (e-)planning and to planners' professional conduct in the field of e-planning. Sabine Roeser in chapter 6 argues that aesthetics should be conceptualized as a qualitative risk factor in designing architecture, in addition to conventional risk factors such as environmental and health risks. In other words, for Roeser "buildings should not only be designed to be sustainable in a technical sense but also in an aesthetic sense… that [buildings] do not risk to be aesthetically outdated in a

few years" (p. 94). There is, according to this argument, a moral obligation to avoid building an environment that is spoiled by aesthetically non-sustainable architecture. This duty or obligation should certainly be extended also to planners and to urban e-planning. Architects, but also other built environment professionals should take into consideration the concerns of the public in their designs (and plans), and "they should use their aesthetic and moral emotions in order to meet the challenge of designing aesthetically sustainable yet innovative architecture" (p. 94). In chapter 7, Bert van Wee and Piet Rietveld discuss from an ethical point of view an important analytical tool, cost-benefit analysis, also relevant for urban e-planning. In particular, the authors discuss the way safety effects are included in cost-benefit analysis applied in transport planning. In the fourth and final chapter of this second part, Emily Talen present strong arguments in favor of a literal interpretation of how urban in/justice is manifested in everyday urban experience, through examples of spatial equity, access, social connectivity, health, safety and aesthetic experience.

The book ends with part III ('Emerging Perspectives') in which rising planning and urban design issues and approaches are discussed. In the first chapter in this section, Jeroen van den Hoven discusses the concept of value-sensitive design or the incorporation of moral values into the design of technical artifacts and systems. He focuses primarily values and requirements of moral import and rightly argues that urban design is in important ways about moral values. Stanley M. Stein and Thomas L. Harper discuss the designer's ethical responsibility arguing that there is for planners an ethical responsibility to resist the process of dehumanization, in the sense of loss of the feeling of connection to the material environments, and also the responsibility to reassert the value of persons. In other words, Stein and Harper argue that built environment professionals and planners in particular have an ethical responsibility to design and plan in ways that increase the meaning of artifacts and environments to users, pointing a few possibilities of doing this in different design contexts.

In the next chapter, Claudia Basta explores ethical issues related to technological risks and distributive justice, and discusses whether it is morally justifiable to create conditions of risk inequality in society despite the availability of alternatives, suggesting in conclusion that the acceptability of risks depends also on the distribution of those risks as others have also argued before. In the last chapter, Timothy Beatley and Marc Bekoff discuss new ways of seeing the relationships between city planning and animals. Beatley and Bekoff show that little attention has been given to animals in the city and in the planning literature, a situation, they argue, that should be changed in order to include more explicitly animals and the many 'others' with whom we share the world where we live.

In sum, as Stefano Moroni emphasizes in the afterword, these well-informed and critical contributions included in the book did not intend to provide a unique response to the complex ethical problems confronting urban planners, designers and architects but rather to highlight key elements in the ongoing debate of these complex ethical issues. For that reason, this collection of essays, written by researchers from different academic backgrounds, will certainly prove useful for students, researchers and other professionals working in the field of urban e-planning.

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