

Urban and Architectural Rephrase of the Discourse on Ubiquitous Space

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1. Introduction

Ubiquitous space, which can be defined briefly here as ‘intellectualized physical space’ or ‘embodied information space’, presupposes practical as well as theoretical questions about the overcome of the ideal separation of physical and information spaces and hence the realization of their creative synthesis. The current discourse on ubiquitous space, mainly involved in the government-oriented u-City projects, focuses only on its technological and business aspects. This study is an attempt to rephrase the discourse on ubiquitous space, not from a technological point of view, but from an urban and architectural one. For this it investigates the conditions in which ubiquitous space can be realized and the everyday and microscopic changes in our experience of built environments which are effected by its realization. Based on the results of this investigation, it is also our primary concern to suggest practical strategies to control and manage ubiquitous space, in such a way as to make it able to operate in a publicly and socially acceptable way.

2. The Condition of Ubiquitous Space

Chapter 2 examines from an urban and architectural point of

view the formal elements of a conceptual model that is essential in rephrasing the discourse on ubiquitous space. For this it carries out a broad range of literature reviews on spatial theory, cyberspace, network, body discourse and so on, based on the tripartite distinction of 'physical space', 'human subject', and 'ubiquitous computing technology.' In particular, it pay its special attention to the dialectic tension between the materialization of information space and the de-materialization of physical space. In effect, it is in the respect that the realization of ubiquitous space should be redefined not merely as a technological problem but as a problem regarding the new mode of interaction between human beings and space.

3. Ubiquitous Space and Architectural Responses

Chapter 3 regards the problem of designing and realizing ubiquitous space, first and foremost, as an 'architectural problem', and examines, through case, studies how the correlation between space and information has been dealt with in the history of architecture. From this it wishes to locate ubiquitous space in the continuing course of architectural history and prepare for a properly architectural method to respond to the emergence of ubiquitous space. Some key architectural terms, such as image accommodation, image production and image reading, can be derived from these efforts, so that we can proceed to re-interpretate the conceptual model in Chapter 2 and thus concretize some possibilities of architectural responses to ubiquitous space.

4. Ubiquitous Space and the Reconstitution of Centrality

Chapter 4 characterizes the effects of ubiquitous space on the 'reconstitution of centrality.' Here the intentions are to investigate how ubiquitous space cannot but make, contrary to its original purpose, human beings subject to particular locations in space, and how it may thus conflict with the pre-established spatial structure of centers while inserting

it into urban environments. It approaches these issues through the concept of 'productive consumption', as ubiquitous space, highly expensive to construct, tends to function as a capitalistic device to promote excessive production by devouring the 'old' space. Its effects on human beings would be yet unexpectedly mighty, for it shall change, whether intended or not, the everyday and microscopic ways of our perceiving the world by replacing the 'old' space of a weak medium with the more powerful medium.

5. Ubiquitous Space as Media

Chapter 5 examines the properties of ubiquitous space as media and proposes public plans to participate in the courses of realizing ubiquitous space as media. In this regards, we first criticize that most foregoing discussions about ubiquitous space remain focused mainly on its formal aspects only. It is because we believe that, insofar as ubiquitous space functions as powerful media, it is as much important to consider a public framework of participation for the sound basis of managing ubiquitous space as its formal properties. It is also argued that such a framework should include stable channels of monitoring and innovating ubiquitous space in order to secure its potential for public interests. In a nutshell, it is the entire framework of ubiquitous space, rather than its formal properties, that is necessary to be controlled primarily through public interventions.

Keywords : Ubiquitous Space, Media, Human Subject, Architecture, Technology, Centrality