

**Culturally Responsive Built Environments**  
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**Lecture – 03**  
**Habitus : A Sense of Place**

Welcome to the course Culturally Responsive Built Environments and we are now at lecture 3. Here we are talking about Habitus: A sense of Place. So, following upon a little recapitulation of what we have discussed on our lecture 1 and lecture 2. So, we actually started with our discussion on how one can define place and we moved on to the next session of place and identity, where we have discussed about various theoretical concepts on we also discussed about various philosophical positions.

So, one of the important concepts which we discussed is the Martin Heidegger's 'Being in time'.


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RECAPITULATION

Heidegger's point is that places "are constructed in our memories and affections through repeated encounters and complex associations".

Dwelling is the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things" (Harvey, 1996:300-301).

Nature ↔ Culture



Houses in Kompong Phluk, Cambodia, 2013  
Image Source: Paul Oliver Vernacular Architecture library

Harvey, D. (1996) *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, pp 210-247  
Heidegger, M. (1973) *Being and Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (translated by J. Macquarrie and B. Blackwell)

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So, Heidegger refers that places are constructed in our memories and affections through repeated encounters and complex associations. And he actually refers this whole process as a kind of workshop where we participate and where we deliberate and where we actually communicate to make our sense of belonging.

So, this is what the whole process is referred to as a dwelling. It is the dwelling is the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and the things. So, what we can see here is it is how a man interacts with nature and how he produces his space and how it is again reproduced with his repeated interactions and how he tailors depending on his needs, depending on his daily living needs and the social needs, the cultural needs and the religious needs.

So, you can see here on the right hand side of houses in compound block in Cambodia. So, you can see how people have developed their housing on stilts because of to protect themselves from the floods or; so, they are trying to adjust themselves with the particular geographic surroundings. So, they are trying to adjust with the nature.

Today we are going to discuss about one of another important person in the debates of in the cultural understanding. So, his name is Bourdieu.

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Bourdieu's Habitus, Fields and Games

Habitus is defined as ' a system of durable transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures that is, as principles which generate and organic practices and representations (Bourdieu 1990:53)

STRUCTURE POWER

STRUCTURAL THEORY OF PRACTICE  
Connecting structure and agency

Bourdieu, Pierre (1990). The Logic of Practice. Polity Press.

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And one of his important contributions to the field of cultural studies is the 'Habitus', he develops a concept of habitus, fields and games. And he is also the pioneer who actually started defining cultural capital. In fact, in his publication 'The logic of practice', he discussed about a structural theory of practice which actually connects the structure and the agency. So, structure here I am not talking about just a building structure, it is about how a society frames its own structure.

And as the whole discussion debate the relationships between the culture, the structure and the power. Because power is in the previous session also we have discussed about the politics of identity we discussed about Babri Masjid, we discussed about how power can influence. We will also discuss about some good examples of how the modernism and the post modernism in with an example of how a place like Chandigarh with the modernistic ideas; if would have been in a place like Riyadh, so the response would have been different.

So, and though it is all a translated from the French versions where the French sociologist. So, this is how he defines the habitus: ‘dabitus is defined as a system of a durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures that is, as principles which generate an organic practices and representations’. Do you understand? I know this is a very difficult to understand for a person from architecture background because its the very deeper understanding, I will try to help you in simplifying this.

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The habitus comprises forms of 'habit' and of 'habitat'. It constructs both the sense of 'place' and the sense of one's 'place in a social hierarchy. (Dovey 2005)'

Field: A field, then is a space of play within a network of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined in the determinations they impose on actions and institutions by their situation in the structure in the distribution of powers.

Dovey (2005) *The Silent complexity of Architecture*, in Hillier and Rooksby (2005) *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, published in Ashgate, UK, USA

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In fact, after the death of Bourdieu, there is an important publication which actually was developed by compilation work by Hillier and Rooksby in their book of 'Habitus; A sense of place' which actually they compiled a lot of work especially from the built environment perspective from an architectural perspective, from the planning perspective, from the anthropological perspective. So, they brought different

perspectives in a different areas of studies and how they have used Bourdieu's concept in their work and not only using Bourdieu's work; how they have criticized it.

So, in our earlier lecture where we are talking about Martin Heidegger's work being in time and how the time gives its position and at the same time how we are also talking about the practices which we are developing in time. So, it is not only in time where you are situated, but it is also within the time how you are developing certain practices.

So, Kim Dovey from Australia he talks about habitus it comprises of forms of habit and of habitat. So, here that repeated interactions and the kind of practice one is developing; he develops kind of he talks it as a forms of habit and how it makes it actually formulates a habitat. So, it constructs both a sense of place and the sense of ones place in a social hierarchy. So, now in the traditional societies let us say there is a feudal group of society living there and there is a lower caste group living in a small hamlet.

Obviously a potters society; they have certain livelihood practices, they are practicing their pottery in the banks of a river or in a hot sun. So, that is how according to their needs how they develop certain habits in making pots, drying pots and at the same time the farmer is also taking the and he is involved in the herding and the agricultural aspects. So, each of them has started defining their roles and responsibilities and that is how they demarcate themselves in a particular society.

So, here Bourdieu refers to one of the important thing called field. So, in a simpler terms this is defined a field then is a space of play within a network of objective relations between positions. So, what are these positions? Now for example, I am here now I am from a society from a small town in Andhra, a town called Nellore. So, I am here who are associated with me is my family and my school. But over the years I moved on to another place where I moved to Hyderabad, where I got a degree, where I did architecture and then I moved on to my for my post graduate to Oxford.

So, in these thing all these whole 22 years of time one has interacted and there are certain sets of fields which I am interacting with my hometown, the people there and I am practicing my customs like on a Sankranti or a Pongal day where we go to traditionally we go to the burial ground and we say we share our ancestors memories.

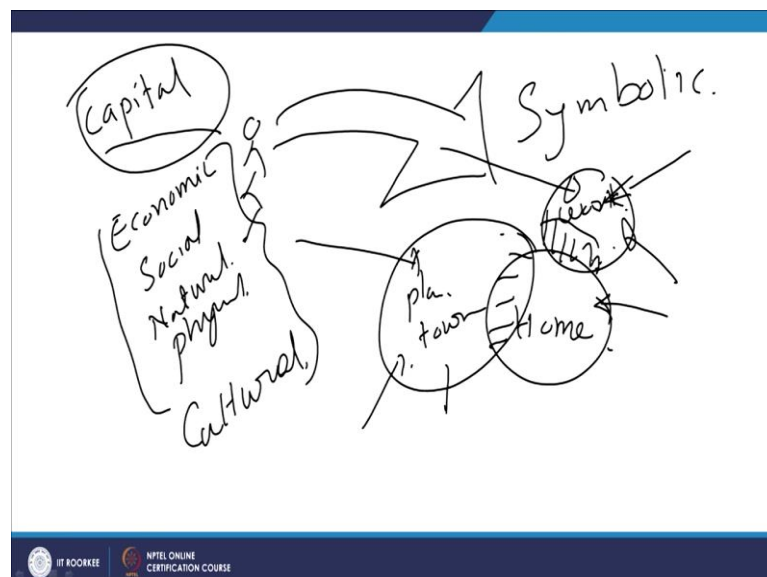
So, where as in Hyderabad; so it has also I attend certain qualities of language the I learnt some kind of slangs of language in order to accommodate within that particular customs and the way the wedding is happened in Hyderabad, the way the weddings are happened in Nellore they slightly different, and whereas in oxford it is a very completely a different society.

So, I am creating my habitus; now in the same way now I have work, I have my school, I have my family. So, now, I have a family; so now, here in my work, my rules are different. Here in oxford my rules and my conditions are different. Here in my hometown my rules for freedom and my understanding of that place the conditions are very different.

So, each field we call it as each field, they have a different set of rules and conditions. Now imagine here I performed well here performed well performed well. But imagine somewhere if I got a job in somewhere in ISIS or a war zone. Now my conditions, my abilities my abilities to perform all these activities what I did here; it may not be the same because the conditions, the constraints which I have are very different.

So, here we talk about these how each field becomes different by its sets of a rules. So, these prepositions are objectively defined in the determinations they impose on actions and institutions by the situation in the structure; in the distribution of powers. So, what are these abilities? So, if I want to talk about it.

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So, now as I said I have work, I have my home and I have my place of larger town right. And there are different maybe my school all these things are which I have experienced in time. So, now I have thing called capital which is referred this Bourdieu talks about the capital which is it is a ability how one can manage his assets; it could be economic, it could be social, it could be natural and it could be the physical a person that the most important thing is the cultural.

So, how with all these assets we call it as a capital and which becomes a symbolic; it becomes a kind of symbolic capital; how you acts here with the given conditions and how you acts here with the given conditions. So, but in these whole process you can see that there will be some kind of overlap within your qualities; your abilities how you are managing the things.

So, now you understand what is a field. So, you can just imagine like it is a kind of playground, it is a cricket playground. Now you have set of rules if you if you want a boundary then it has to cross this line, if you have LBW; so, all these set of rules what to do and what not to do. So, that field offers to you and that game offers to you now a set of rules.

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The Habitus is a subject to constant change, but such revisions are always based on existing social practices- which the habitat may change radically, the habitat evolves (Bourdieu 2000:161)

**Game:** Players learn from experience about what is possible and what is not; about how to work effectively within existing practices in the field and how the rules might be modified.

Bourdieu P (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*: Polity Press, Cambridge.

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Now, this habitus is subject to constant change, but such revisions are always based on existing social practices which the habitat may change radically in the habitat gradually evolves. So, now, we talked about a field this is a field; I will tell you a small example.

Now if you are playing a game of a cricket and you have the boundary; like this; so, you play cricket. May be for 10 years-15 years you are playing a cricket.

So, players who are we? We are all players playing cricket. Now we learn from experience; it is like living, it is also like playing; it is a celebration. So, we learn through our experience, what is possible and what is not. So, you always develop your strategies; yes if you want to bowl him, so you develop a strategy and you learn these rules, you learn this techniques, how to win the game or you know how to manage it. So, you learnt how to work effectively within the existing practices in the field and the how the rules might be modified. Okay. So, now you are practicing let us say for 5-10 years you are viewing now you feel that yes for instance even in the cricket now they the kind of the mode of game has drastically changed; earlier the 50 overs game is now a 20 over game.

So, obviously, there are set of modifications which you are imposing that is only coming through a practice and it is your learning. And why you are making this changes? You are basically accommodating yourself. And similarly if I say football.


So, obviously, a football have a different field. It has its targets of the goals and in both the cases the rules differ. So, just imagine now the same person; if you make them to play football, is it easy for him to swift the change drastically. So, obviously, of course, in the real life you have the multi talented a play both football and cricket, but; obviously, the rules and the conditions are differ, he cannot play the same way as he was playing cricket in the football match.

So, that is the same thing you know we as when we are accommodating our self with in the field to the our needs and which are changing everyday and we are trying to set up our own rules to so that we can abide with that.

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**Second birth**

Bourdieu (1990:68) states that when we are forced (or may choose) enter another field than the one in which we are 'at home'. This involves learning a new set of rules, a process that is slow and painful and which we experience...(cited in John Friedmann 2005).



Ikea refugee shelters being put to use.  
Photograph: Courtesy of Ikea  
Image Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/jul/30/refugee-shelters-new-designs-ikea-fema-military-haiti-jordan-syria-iraq>

John Friedmann (2005) *Placemaking as project? Habitus and Migration in Transnational cities*, in Hillier and Rooksby (2005) *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, published in Ashgate, UK, USA

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And that is how that is he referring to the games what kind of and now what happens in the previous slide we talked about a suddenly we change the game from a cricket to a football the rules are different, the context is different, the player has a difficulty in understanding it. It may be a new player will definitely will have a greater, I mean difficulty in understanding how this particular game has to be achieved.

So, I will tell you an example. John Friedmann, he refers this thing called second birth. When we are forced or may choose enter another field than one which we are at home. Imagine a cricket player a famous cricket player Sachin Tendulkar; if the Indian government if he assigns them to play football and sent him for the Olympics match.

Obviously, he will have a little difficulty, he may not able to compete with the regular football players; maybe he will have a little difficulty because his expertise in that he is used to that practices. So, similarly; so when you are forced that when he enters into another field and he has to what he has to do?

He has to learn the rules of the game and a process is it a whole day match or is it a 90 minute match. So, you need to know the new set of rules what is your target? And who are your companions and this is a very difficult thing sometimes it is very slow and it is sometimes very painful.



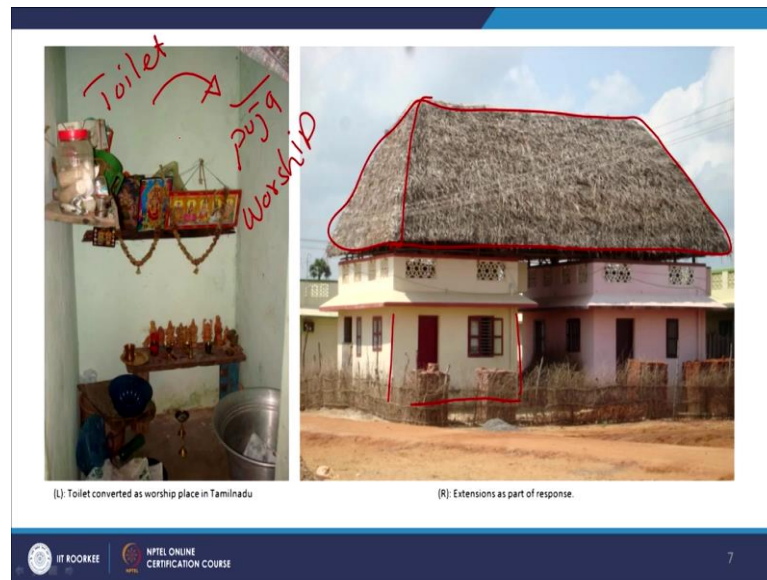
I will give you an example. What you see on the right hand side; now the whole world we have a lot of refugees starting from Syria, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Iran, Iraq and also from the South American countries in the Cuba and also the Mexican countries and they also have some of the refugees from the African countries and here in Bangladesh.

So, now an architect from a built environment perspective; So, these population living in African countries or the some of the Middle Eastern countries; when they started escaping for their survival to other countries., obviously, certain refugee programs are taken up by UNHCR and many agencies have participated in how to, many agencies have participated in how to accommodate them, how to integrate them in the process.

So, in for example, you can see that these shelter houses which were actually by the Ikea refugee; the Swedish giant Ikea, the furniture giant has given this kind of prototypes which will have, they call it kind of sustainable futures, but then a person live there for all their life in a Syrian culture or in an African culture. So, had a great difficulty in accommodating with these so called sustainable houses.

For instance, the way they cook, it was different; the way they socialize it was very different. They couldn't find their neighbours, they couldn't find though they have saved by life, but are they have any support systems. So, this whole process it is not just a home, it is about how, but if these homes imagine if some people start adapting to it in a longer run, maybe they start defining it in a different way. I will show you how it works.

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Now, I told you an example of a refugee shelter and here I am giving you an example of post disaster housing; in the post disaster housing it is the same thing to people because of the impact of the disaster, they are forced to move somewhere else on a relocation program or a reconstruction program.

And now in the tsunami this is my work the actually in the Tamil Nadu area in south of India. Here, after, these are the houses, the core dwelling units, which were given by the agencies to the fishermen communities. Now, in these fisherman of course, they are very permanent in nature, constructed with brick and concrete.

They are very durable and what kind of allocation process they have followed and when they started asking about what kind of houses do you brought and everyone have ask for brick and, brick and concrete house and there is a good communication time. And then that is what exactly given to them and now in this whole process the joint families have broken up into nuclear families.

And earlier they were all living; the mother, the father and the elder child and the little one everyone used to live in a one big house, but now after the tsunami reconstruction; so, peoples started moving to different clusters.

And here you can see, in the allocation process also many of the agencies have adopted a lottery approach. So, let's say a number 52 you have got a house somewhere else and

number 56 some got somewhere else, but in this case fortunately two brothers have got adjacent to each other.

So, what they did and they have modified, they have personalized their house by their traditional form and you can see from, its a very interesting photograph you can see that they have though they have these two plots and then over the above they tried to make a very huge massive roof which actually represents a single family belonging.

This is one of the very important photograph and the agencies have given toilets. Now in with my interactions in the fishermen communities; I was, it was a little surprise for me when I realize that, yes these communities some of the communities have never use a toilets in their life and now some of them, but not even aware of how to use a toilet.

So, this is a completely a different experience for them because they normally use a open lands for going for a toilet, but here when they were given a toilet one in one house I remember the moment I entered the house the whole house was smelling like anything.

Then we just saw I just asked them why is this so smell? They said there was a hole; so because we are a fisherman we thought it was a dustbin we are keeping all the fish that into that. So, I was little shocked that they were not even aware of this was a toilet and how to use it. So, they had a great difficulty and now what here you can see is that photograph of a toilet is converted as a place of Pooja room, we call it is a place of worship.

So, now a toilet to a Pooja room; so see how people have responded to it. So, this is where an architects have to be sensitive about how who are these beneficiaries and what are their cultural background and how, what are their living practices. So, this is where we have to be sensitive with the local cultures.

Now, there has been a lot of criticism in Bourdieu's. So, so we understand now the fields and the games and the sense of you know habitat; how they are making a sense of place and the whole process referred is a kind of habitus. Though we refers the some challenges because Bourdieu is concept is very well applied in different subjects.

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Criticism on Bourdieu's work

Bourdieu's work remain a powerful intellectual framework for understanding this field, yet it is notable that it is only ever used as a basis for architectural critique and not for critical approaches to architectural practice – (Kim Dovey 2005).

Bourdieu's development of the habitus concept was most often criticized for not sufficiently addressing the conditions of change or the conscious agency of individuals in adapting to social transformations or sudden disruptions (Waterson 2005).

Dovey (2005) *The Silent complicity of architecture*, in Hillier and Rooksby (2005) *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, published in Ashgate, UK, USA

Waterson (2005) *Enduring Landscape, changing Habitus: The Sa'dan Toraja of Sulawesi Indonesia*, in Hillier and Rooksby (2005) *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, published in Ashgate, UK, USA

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Starting from the educational psychology to many other subjects, but from the built environment also I am just pointing it out a few criticisms from the Bourdieu. He says it is still a remain a powerful intellectual framework for understanding this field, but says it is only ever used as a basis for architectural critique and not for critical approaches to architectural practice. So, it is I mean; it is only used for a kind of architectural critique purposes, but it is not used as an approach to architectural practice.

So, that is one of the criticism he talks, but. And Roxana Waterson is an again an anthropology his background she talks she worked a lot in the Indonesian tribes. In Bourdieu's habitus concept was most often criticized for not sufficiently addressing the conditions of change or the conscious agency of individuals in adapting to social transformations or sudden disruptions. The slide which I showed you just now is then a good example of how the change is happens within the communities, how people respond to it and especially with the sudden disruptions and. So, Bourdieu, she talk that Bourdieu's concept, it talks about how people play within it, but then how people adapt to it, how people change their habitus. So, that is where it is not much well discussed, that is what she referred as.

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We must locate architecture, as a language of forms, not only embedded within various cultural discourses, but also giving meaning by those discourses (Leach 2005).

Leach, N. (2005) *Towards a Theory of Identification with space*, published in Hillier and Rookby (2005), *Habitat: A Sense of Place: Belonging*, Ashgate, UK, USA

Foundations of Cultural Geography Series

Image Source: Rapaport (1969) *House Form and Culture*, PRENTICE-HALL, INC., Engle Wood Cliffs, NJ.

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Now, Neil Leach is a one of the important pioneer in this particular field where he talks about we must locate, because I am slightly taking you into discussion from culture and towards a built form and the architecture. So, he talks about we must locate architecture as a language of forms; not only embedded within various cultural discourses, but also giving meaning by those discourses.

So, when we talk that architecture how it could itself become a language; you know that is what Leach talks how it could become a language of forms not only embedded within various cultural discourses, but also giving meaning by these discourses. So, how people modify certain things and how they are producing these meanings and now they are these meanings are reproduced the later generations and how they are modified and how they are adjusted.

And I would like to now bring end of the session of this particular lecture. And taking into Amos Rapaport's contribution on house form and culture; and this is one of the initial work where they talk about what is the relationship between a house form and the local culture.

And what is a vernacular architecture, what is a primitive architecture, what is an indigenous architecture and because in this particular when we talk about the language of architectural forms; obviously, they vary from a small scale to a monumental scale. So, he brings the distinction of how we can actually define the non-pedigreed architecture.

So, this is one of the important work which one has to refer as a very basic subject; if we have to understand the culturally responsive built environments from the built environment studies, this is one of the important contribution in the field.

And so, here I end my lecture and thank you very much. In the next class we will be discussing about Amos Rapaport's work and with various examples of a vernacular architecture. And we basically start with the home series of introduction to vernacular architecture.

Thank you very much.