

MATTERS REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF SPACE BETWEEN DESIGN AND PERCEPTION

APRECIERI PRIVIND IDENTITATEA SPAȚIULUI ÎNTRE CONCEPȚIE ȘI PERCEPȚIE

ȘTEFAN Diana¹

e-mail: stefan_g_diana@yahoo.com

Abstract. *In this paper the author studies the scientific literature in order to clarify the terms of design and perception in relation to the identity of space. The scientific literature highlights four theoretical directions on the relationship between designs – perceptions – the identity of space. For example, the identity of space is a function of urban – architectural reality, of sentimental - emotional reality and a variation of determinants. In this regard the variation of determinants is a function connected with the mass of receptors (residents, tourists, non-tourists, professionals etc.) and with the mass of transmitters (buildings, streets, urban furniture, green spaces, billboards etc.). The authors appreciate that people give form to the environment as the environment forms people, stressing the interdependence of the ways and their living environment. Adding the analysis it's determined that the individual has a certain model after which operates in urban environments (mental maps), there is a variation of the determinants that conditions his perception, certain elements that make him close to the environment (territoriality), meanings are assigned to the space that surrounds him and is judged by peers according to the environment in which he lives. The sum does not follow a set of rules, laws and general principles of perception that leads to good urban design of urban – architectural reality, both contributing to the clarity of the identity of a space.*

Keywords: design, perception, identity.

Rezumat. *În lucrare autorul studiază literatura de specialitate cu scopul de a clarifica termenii de concepție și percepție în relație cu identitatea spațiului. Literatura de specialitate pune în evidență patru direcții teoretice privind relația concepție – percepție – identitatea spațiului. Spre exemplu, identitatea spațiului este o funcție a realității urbanistic – arhitecturale, a realității emoțional – afective și a schemei determinanților. În acest sens schema determinanților este o funcție legată de masa receptorilor (rezidenți, vizitatori, non-vizitatori, profesioniști etc.) și a masei emițătorilor (clădiri, străzi, mobilier urban, spații verzi, panouri publicitare etc.). Autorul apreciază faptul că oamenii dau forma mediului înconjurător și mediul înconjurător formează oamenii, subliniind interdependența dintre modul și mediul de viață al acestora. Însușind analizele efectuate s-a stabilit că individul are un anumit model după care își desfășoară activitățile în spațiul urban (hărți mentale), există o schemă a determinanților ce îi condiționează percepția, anumite elemente îl fac apropiat de mediul înconjurător (teritorialitatea), atribuie semnificații spațiului ce îl înconjoară și este judecat de semenii în funcție de mediul în care trăiește. Din sumă nu rezultă o serie de reguli, legi și principii generate de*

¹ „Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, Romania

percepție care duc la o bună concepție a realității urbanistic – arhitecturale, ambele contribuind la claritatea identității unui spațiu.

Cuvinte cheie: *concepție, percepție, identitate.*

INTRODUCTION

Research on the relationship between designs – perception – the identity of space, with man as unit, were made mainly during the 1960-1970. Authors who have distinguished themselves in this field are Kevin Lynch with “*The Image of the City*”, Donald Appleyard with “*Ambient et Comportament*” (1977), Christian Norberg-Schulz with “*Habiter. Versune architecture figurative*” (1984), Edward Hall (1966) and others.

Design is the process by which a team of specialists comes with solutions and improvements to the current problems of urban – architectural reality. The team of specialists consists in a number of people trained in science and varied disciplines such as urbanism, architecture, sociology, economics, mathematics, geography, ecology etc., which work together to resolve given problems. This interaction results in a sum of factors, principles and laws underlying the future design.

The speech regarding **perception** is sporadic, oscillating between subjectivism and objectivism, between personal poles and urban space poles. Perception has a fundamental reason in “need for localization” (Tolman, 1951) and is directly linked to individual experience, with familiarity, with mood, with performed activities and with the configuration of the environment. Studies have shown that perception is operational, responsive and inferential.

Analysing the literature in the field it’s considered that until now were obtained data on perception, individual behaviour in urban space, but has not yet reached a sum of rules, laws and principles arising from this data that would lead to a better design of space that it will cause it’s strong identity.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To highlight the relationship between designs – perception – the identity of space, the author used as research methods the bibliographic study, phenomenology, semiotics and the method of combining several theories.

Man, the unit of measurement of the relationship mentioned above, perceive the urban – architectural reality not only visually (images) but also by auditory, olfactory and tactile means, aspect referred by phenomenology.

The individual assigns meanings to urban - architectural reality generated by signs, symbols and connotations. This award constitutes the sentimental – emotional reality. This aspect is studied by semiotics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Studies on the relationship between design – perception – the identity of space has as a starting point the determining plan which includes determinants assign to the mass of receptors (individuals) and determinants assign to the mass of transmitters (urban – architectural reality) (Fig. 1).

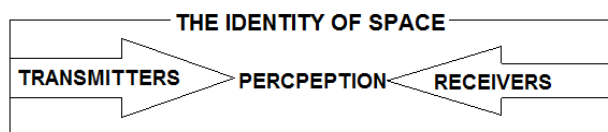


Fig. 1 –The relationship between determining plan – perception – the identity of space.

Depending on the receiver and the transmitter the determining plan include the following:

- The mass of receptors:
 - sex, age, religion;
 - residents, tourists, non-tourists, professionals, disabled;
 - the geographical area of origin;
 - the availability of the individual to spend time indoors or outdoors;
 - cultural differences (differences in perspective of space between an individual from a northern city and one from a southern city);
 - the experience of the individual in different places;
 - education, the level of income, the level of stress etc. .
- The mass of transmitters:
 - the shape of the object, accessibility, style, height, size;
 - the area is built, the period in which it was built;
 - material, colour, light etc.

The bibliographic study highlights four important models in the relationship between designs – perception – the identity of space.

There is **mental maps** pattern set by Kevin Lynch in 1960 in his book “*The Image of the City*”. Following the studies it concluded that users understand the surroundings in a consistent and predictable form, mental maps of five elements: routes (roads, streets, sidewalks and other paths), edges (perceived boundaries, walls, buildings etc.), districts (relatively large sections of the city distinguished by a certain identity or character), nodes (crossings, focal points etc.), landmarks (easily identifiable objects that serve as reference points).

This theory gathers the thinking of the individual and his way of orientation in space in a simplified scheme that does not include factors that cause the individual to choose certain routes, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks in a given area and how it interprets these chosen elements. A person who uses the city, carrying various tasks, selects certain aspects of their environment in conducting those tasks. Set in an x point of the town, the individual who must operate in a y point of the city, will choose a route that is not necessarily conditioned by its dimension but by personal experience.

The idea of identifying any person with a particular place and its reporting to it was stated by Christian Norberg-Schulz in “*Habiter. Vestrune architecture figurative*” (1984).

Identification refers to the quality of things and orientation to their spatial correlation. Architectural works are objects that embodies the core value of human identification, reproducing the world as it is. Identifying always refers to everyday actions, therefore depends on psychological orientation function.

The elements of architectural language which one identifies with may be concentrated in three areas: morphology, topology and typology. Morphology is how the form was built. Spatial order translated into organization is stated by topology. Typology expresses manifestations of habitat types.

The individual can identify with one, more or all aspects of architectural language. If man is reflected in many aspects of urban – architectural reality, the identity of space becomes more clear and forceful.

Identification as well as mental maps aren't presented by their authors as concepts that encompass the entire relationship between design – perception – the identity of space, it still remains neglected the factors that influence them.

Proxemics theory defined by Edward Hall in 1966 is designating how the use of space depends on its quality of territory and its cultural components.

Man assigns meanings to physical space, as such human territory is eminently social. The territory itself doesn't exist, it has no reality except by one who uses it and makes it an object of knowledge. The territory is a physical space cutting in areas defined subjectively by the quality of relations established by it.

“Territoriality is the basis of stable social organization” (Edney, 1975).

There are three types of territories: the primary territory occupied constantly by the same person or group of people (for example: homes), the secondary territory which is not clear who belongs to, a relatively large number of people have access (for example: a certain place in the classroom) and public territory over which individuals do not believe they have rights when they don't occupy it (for example: a park bench). The distinction between these categories contribute to understanding the sentimental – emotional reality of individuals associated to the territory and how an individual will react when their territory is invaded (Fig. 2).

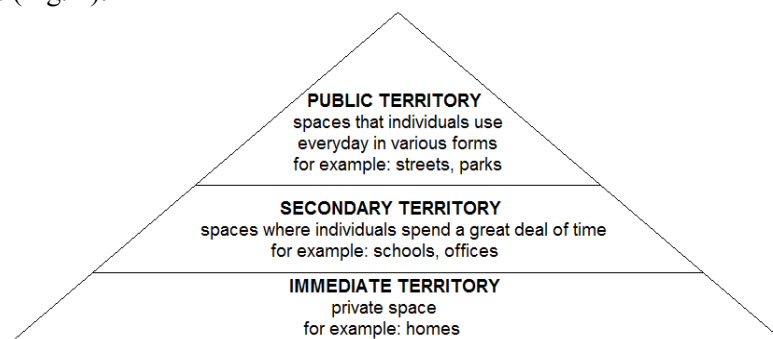


Fig. 2 – The importance of bringing closer the territory to the individual.

Individuals derive part of their identity from these territories. Protecting territory by individuals, in fact of their self, analogies with the animal world. The individuals are more successful in different situations where their territory is: in football we have to do with a “surprise” when the foreign team wins. Changes over centres, routs, landmarks etc. can be perceived as an invasion of space which may lead to a negative reaction, reason underlying territoriality.

People use markers recognizable by everyone, such as objects or signs that indicate possession of the territory by a particular individual.

Proxemics exposes the attachment to territory and the way individual attribute it (markers that are recognizable to everyone). It remains to be seen whether the concept of territory changes according to media, economic, political influences and if it differs from one culture to another.

New factors influencing the relationship between design – perception – the identity of space are formulated by Jean Baudrillard in “*Module on Simulacra and Simulation*” explaining the distinction between reality and semblance loss.

In postmodern culture our society has become so confident in models and maps that all contact with the real world that preceded the map is lost. The new factors of postmodern culture that influence the relationship mentioned above are: media culture, exchange – value relationship, multinational capitalism, urbanization, language and ideology.

Media culture represented by television, movies, magazines, billboards and the internet is concerned not only about sharing information, but also with the interpretation of individual privacy for himself, causing him to address to peers through the lens of media. Man no longer purchase goods according to their needs, but because of the desire increasingly polished by promos, which take the individual a step away from the reality of his own body and the world around him.

Entry into capitalism meant that the individual has stopped to think of goods purchased through the **utilization – value ratio**, property started to lose its material reality. Instead it began to be seen after value and in what it can be changed, its exchange value, assets are regarded by the individual through the **exchange – value ratio**. Multinational capitalism results in loss of basic notion of the goods consumed. Much of the consumers of Starbucks brand, recognized worldwide as a distributor of coffee, wouldn’t be able to recognize a coffee tree and to know the process of obtaining the finished product.

Urbanization leads to an alienation of man from the natural environment.

The language, in subtle ways, keeps the individual away from reality. Postmodernism understands the ideology as a support to human perception of reality. There is nothing outside ideology, at least nothing that can be expressed by an articulated language. Because people are so reliable on language to structure their own perception, any representation of reality is always already ideological sham, always already built by simulacra.

This hypothesis is sounding the alarm on the true urban – architectural reality and the susceptible sentimental – emotional reality. As a conclusion to

those mentioned above, the relationship between designs – perception – the identity of space is strongly influenced by the society characteristics, which are always evolving.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on determinants plan the study highlights four models in the relationship between designs – perception – the identity of space. The models listed are: mental maps, identifying an individual with a particular place and its responding to it, proxemics and the new factors of postmodern world.

2. Adding the analysis it's determined that the individual has a certain model after which operates in urban environments (mental maps), there is a variation of the determinants that conditions his perception, certain elements that make him close to the environment (territoriality), meanings are assigned to the space that surrounds him and is judged by peers according to the environment in which he lives. The sum does not follow a set of rules, laws and general principles of perception that leads to good urban conception of urban – architectural reality, both contributing to the clarity of the identity of a space.

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