

20th International Seminar on Urban Form

Conference Sub-Theme

Pushing the Edge – New technologies and new techniques

Title: Humanized Urbanism - [Human behavior in public spaces in a contemporary city] - A action methodology

Abstract

As a social being, human being interacts with everything around him, promoting exchanges between various objects that surround it and a range of environments that populate their feelings, cognitions and expectations.

Human being houses in the entire world are a reflection of socio-cultural values of time and region. When human being builds houses, builds a physical and a psychological environment. However, the built environment is becoming increasingly inappropriate to the context of life. Population density, degeneration of the central areas, pollution and disposal are some of the environmental stresses to which the urban human is subject.

To understand an environment, it is essential to understand the people who inhabit it, with all its cultural, social, economic and psychological factors.

Architects should be aware of the individual's social and cultural sphere. Their performances contribute to solidify the architectural foundation and allow the approaching to a more appropriate response.

It's essential to the cities understanding and behaviors factors that individuals have in relation to these spaces, leading to the creation of new meeting and entertainment places for people, revitalizing the concept of enjoying the historical places, submitting economic and social handling and influence changes in the city's own urban context.

KEYWORDS: City, person, environment, psychology, behavior

Introduction

During our entire existence we live in a collective way. Because of this, the urban reality, the city's public spaces, such as its streets, town squares and parks belong to the urbanites.

Our own political dimension is directly related to the practice of citizenship, our collective existence, of the need to preserve the social fabric, all of which are reflected through the political powers.

There are cities where integration does not exist, mostly because what exists is segregation. In these cases, the need is to create a collective culture, of citizenship and social leadership. To encourage the development of an effective social participation pathway so people can live better.

Bearing in mind the scope and dimension of the above mentioned phenomenon, and through intensive scientific research, I directed myself to Environmental Psychology. Environmental Psychology is defined as the study of urban behavior and its environment, as it is arranged and defined by the human being. Ever since 1960 numerous studies and work has been done on this subject, most of which is based in the acknowledgement of the environmental problems, such as pollution, which increasingly affects the collectivities.

The urban planner must be aware of the social and cultural sphere of the individual. His performance, compromised by this fact, will contribute to help solidify the urban foundation as, at the same time, allows the approach to a more appropriate response. However, this is not the only key to urban success. In this sense this research will be relevant because it contributes to a better understanding of it. With this study, I intend to demonstrate how Urbanism may be used for a psychological enhancement of Society.

This study will contribute to the development of new methods of analysis and/or to create new focus points associated with the interpretation and understanding of Environmental Psychology in the relationship with its environment and, consequently leading to new methods of intervention in the reconstruction and creation of new spaces, thus promoting Quality of Life in the intervened environment.

These new methods focus on points that may help the project technicians (Urban planners and Architects) during their academic training. They may also help city officials, maybe even the government, to enforce laws, directly or indirectly, promoting the Quality of Life of its inhabitants.

To be aware of our capacity to change our environment and to understand the need to have the analyst present in the in all day-to-day contexts - observing, understanding that the person and the environment are one entity and the individual acts on the environment as well as the environment acts on the individual - influence. As social beings, humans interact with everything around them, promoting exchanges between the various objects surrounding them, as well as a range of environments that populate their feelings, their cognitions and their expectations. Scholars in the field of architectural history know that the form and appearance of a building can influence behaviors within. All over the world, Human housing reflects our socio-cultural and regional values at a given moment thus expressing needs that go far beyond the simple need for physical shelter and comfort.

When human beings built houses they don't just built a physical protective environment. They construct a psychological environment filled with meanings, a symbolic world that intensifies a specific set of tastes and values. However, the created environment is progressively becoming more inadequate with the context of our lives. Population density, deterioration of central areas, pollution and alienation are some of the environment stresses to which Urban People are subjected to.

Urbanism

The word Urbanism was coined from the studies of Catalan engineer Ildefonso Cerdá, who was responsible for the expansion of Barcelona in the 1850s. Despite never having used the term Urbanism, Cerdá introduced the term *urbe* (from the latin *urbi et orbi*, i. e., to the city – of Rome – and to the World) to designate the different types of human settlements, and the term *urbanization* to designate interventions on the *urbe*. From these two terms comes in the beginning of the 20th century the word Urbanism. Cerdá publish several studies on the cities of Barcelona and Madrid, focusing on the different aspects of them, from technical issues (street and infrastructure analysis) to more theoretical and territorial ones (e.g. how to connect the cities through a great national network).

The rapid process of Urbanization – a phenomenon closely linked to industrialization - is a reality that, in the last centuries, affected every country in the world. The disorderly occupation of urban land downgraded the cities, making life more difficult for its inhabitants by reducing habitation spaces, providing insufficient urban services – water supply, sewers, lights and telephones –inefficient public transportation, difficult road

circulation, lack of community equipments, insufficient and poor quality education, lack of social services, sanitation and reduced number of parks and leisure areas.

Major cities trigger major urban problems such as the environmental impact and the loss of Quality of Life of its inhabitants. These problems are worse in third world countries, where the majority of the population lives in conditions of extreme poverty and where people suffer from poor housing, lack of hygiene, and poor basic sanitation.

Urbanization in third world countries is characterized by a disorganized growth, with the urban centers suffering from an extremely fast demographic growth, showing signs of major problems in sanitation and congestion, environmental deterioration and vast human settlements in sub-human conditions.

Urban planning is no longer oriented to the development of entire cities but to the development of spaces, of places which develop human relationships within that complex city. Now, defining and developing an ideal city give way to a new paradigm which proposes drawing *places* in a real city.

The concept of *place* is an environmental form built and filled with symbolic meaning, thus drawing in its users and by fulfilling their perception guarantees the success and vitality of the urban space and a future orientation of urban planning and architectural projects.

Urbanism presents the idea of *place* as a qualified space and where the population is aware of all its deep meanings, reflected in images and strong references.

With the idea of *place*, the physical and psychological factors accompany the urban morphology planning and a person's interactive behavior in the continuous use of these forms. (Lineu Castello – 1997).

Today we face profound changes in society's *modus vivendi*. Human life is conditioned by an Information Era with a postmodern experience.

One of the major issues raised now-a-days is through which method should one try to follow and understand the effects that modernization caused in the urban condition. We must understand the mutations manifesting themselves in the culture and urban development so we can develop new methods that will allow the creation of new conceptual frameworks, oriented towards the XXI century city's urban form.

Visual culture is the dominant logic.

The world of architecture and urbanism is a world that expresses all kind of meanings through images. The drawing of the urban form creates influences in the

perception of its users the same way the informational drawing has the ability to influence that same perception.

It is increasingly important to understand the concept of *place* within the modern city, in which the field of private space transpires strength and technique for the creation of *Places* in which, consequently, the public domain tries to adjust to this potential, creating benefits for the community of users. And thus, adjusting urban and architectural projects to a new contemporary concept.

Nowadays the concept of *place* includes social, psychological, urban and architectural factors, resulting in the creation of a new *modus vivendi* for the new society which includes behavioral analysis, urban management (ethic and aesthetic), the economic side, the environmental sustainability and the existential philosophy.

The projection method begins with creating support infrastructures that are based in environmental perception techniques, allowing the quick detection of stimuli inserted in a specific urban environment and transpire the allocation of spatial qualities in the configuration of an urban form, morphologically representing the concept and meaning of *Place*

Portugal

Regarding Portugal, its location in the European Atlantic Seaboard and subsequent maritime vocation allowed the expansion that resulted in a concentration of activities in the two major harbor cities: Lisbon and Oporto, whilst ignoring the interior of the country. This unbalance of the urban network existed for decades, ever worsening during the 60s due to major emigration to other European countries and migration to the coast, which caused depopulation of the inland areas of the country. This immigration phenomenon towards the main coastal urban centers leads to a degradation of the living conditions In the cities, perceived through illegal and precarious housing.

A City will only be healthy if it is sustainable first and where, according to Coimbra (2002), there are sustainability indicators that can be linked, such as:

- `Indicators of environmental quality': air quality, water, urban landscape, the destination of municipal solid waste, weather conditions, sanitation, the specific reality of each city;

- 'Indicators of Soil Occupation and Use and of Social Space': design of new occupations, verification of previous occupations, adequate urban signaling , safe areas for leisure, reserve space for expansion and restoration of natural spaces;

- 'Indicators of Social Quality': security against urban risk, i.e., existence of pluvial sewers, electrical and cables installations, security against police risks, minimization of the stress and tensions in urban areas caused by harmful elements (noise and visual pollution), preservation of the city's memory, leisure, promotion of sport events, educational and health programs, unity between the government and its citizens. The current urban scenario, especially in the major cities, characterized by discomfort, insecurity and lack of quality of life, begs for a conscious intervention. Today's Society is in constant evolution and change. As such, we must understand how Urbanism can relate and guide it.

Behavioral Analysis

The sociocultural values of the time and region are reflected in one's home, no matter where you are around the world. There are needs that go beyond simple comfort or physical shelter like the psychological needs for identity, creativity and harmony with the world.

Humans possess the innate ability of transforming its environment in order to satisfy a wide array of human needs. These factors may have a positive but also a negative impact.

Our general concern is not only the economic and cultural factors but also the psychological, where man has been exploited and discredited by the technological evolution.

The quick growing modification of the environment may not improve our well-being survival chances. We must consider possible factors that may lead in the long run to human consequences.

The human-being effects changes from a communicable and unique culture other species do not have. This gives human beings a degree of control unlike any other species on the planet.

Despite the biological and physical complexity of the interrelationship between man and environment, the psychological and social factors are the ones that matter to our analysis.

These are areas about which we know little and are less developed than the research conducted in the physical and biological world.

The human being's psychological environment is built and enjoyed by him, and it is because he is influenced by his own transformation product that research of this relationship is so crucial. By understanding the implications of the human-environment relation we can revert and re-channel actions that have changed the environment.

In order to gain a complete understanding of all analysis processes it is imperative the full knowledge of the person inserted in a given environment (values, attitudes, social and cultural rules, etc.).

The physical world is changing increasingly faster, trying to respond to a strong population pressure causing people to relate within themselves and towards their environment in totally new ways.

We evaluate the space by its uses, by the unfolding of social processes affected by the architectural intervention, by the ecological context transmitted by nature, by the effects of density, the territorial and cultural influences, the importance of urban planning as creator of the identity of the space.

We excel in adapting to our surroundings and, according to René Dubois (1968), our adaptability may lead us to adapt to conditions that ultimately may destroy human factors.

Margaret Mead (1970) speaks of a "social acceleration" of a human species quickly adapting to new technology. Evolutionary processes that used to take generations are quickly assimilated in just a few years, something which is not necessarily a positive thing.

We must consider the cultural and historical side, our personality and even our momentary humor, as factors to a distorted observation of the objective world. We believe the environment is structured in a certain way, when in fact it may not be.

We organize the environment in a cognitive way, as a set of mental images. The role we play in that environment is the result of our own distorted perception and expectations.

We also associate to the perceived environment the symbolic value, with the distinction between literal perception (aesthetic, coherence) and its meaning in terms of function and value.

The sense of attachment to a certain space forms a set of social, physical and psychological information that relate to each other (Giuliani, 2003 e 2004; Speller, 2005).

There are several different factors that lead to great discomfort to the users of the various architectural spaces. One of the most significant factors is the lack of consideration by those users, in their psychosocial aspect, in the realization of architecture projects and urbanism.

They should be developed taking into account the human concept in all its aspects and, from these, submit proposals in the artistic, scientific and political fields. A project developed based on human needs, both in individual and social.

Psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) was considered one of the first to value the interaction between Human and Environment. His main purpose was to determine the influence that the environment had on the people, the relationships established between them, the way people behave, react, act and organize themselves in the environment where they operate.

This environment mentioned by Lewin may be defined as all the contexts in which the human being operates, such as housing, offices, schools, streets, etc., and that has a greater influence over group behavior than individuals.

“Man and its extensions form an interrelated system. It’s a mistake to act as if Man is one thing and their houses, cities, technology or language is another entirely different. Due to the inter-relationship between man and its extensions it is convenient we pay great attention to the type of extensions that we create (...). As the extensions are inanimate, you need to feed them with feedback so we know what is happening, particularly in the case of extensions that can shape or replace the natural environment. ”

(Edward. Hall, 1966)

Although Edward Hall’s text has been written 45 years ago, it refers to a field of work that is still relatively unexplored. Despite the ability to create/shape spaces and, although most of the world’s population dwells in cities, little has been done to broaden the knowledge of the interface between environment and human behavior.

The most enjoyable cities and urban agglomerations are the ones that offer a rich and positive environmental experience. The environmental quality that contributes to social harmony and cultural vitality becomes one of the key factors of the economic success of a city.

The participation, evaluation and posture of the human being, before the environment is the basis for analyzes in the Environmental Psychology, which will help in future environmental interventions and Urban Planning. In 1971, the AIA Philadelphia, a Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, held a conference and an exhibition at the Franklin Institute on the subject of “Architecture for the Human Behavior”. The goal was to draw attention to Environmental Psychology research. The success of the conference and of the works presented led to the organization and publication in 1974 of a volume edited by Jon Lang, Charles Burnette, Walter Moleski and David Vachon, under the title “Designing for Human Behavior: Architecture and the Behavioral Sciences”. This work meant to demonstrate that the development of this theoretical basis was not only desirable but truly necessary

The goal of Environmental Psychology is the analysis of psychosocial relationships established between the people and their socio physical return. This occurs in the multidisciplinary field since to consider the relation of Human Beings with the Environment without considering the physical and psychosocial aspects of this relationship is not appropriate. It is necessary that the human being comes home and finds his home, it is necessary that the Human Being identifies himself with a part of the City, with a piece of street (Wilheim, 1998).

Interrelationship between Psychology/Urbanism/Architecture

The transformation and evolution of new technology created new possibilities regarding the organization and appropriation of knowledge. The aim is to define a new pedagogical philosophy which allows new forms of transmission. The use of digital technology transforms the information into knowledge.

This new way to gain knowledge leads to a comprehensive number of educational possibilities and consequent possible actions by the education institutions, research and government departments.

In the field of architecture and urbanism, this allows us to develop the present thinking in the future, by developing new strategies and procedural developments that embrace the technological advances, volumetric and spatial changes that adapt to the changes in social relations, the architectural and urban organization.

Educational institutions train specialized technicians in architecture and urbanism that, through acquired knowledge by the institutions themselves and by the people trained are able to, develop building and public spaces projects. In reality, technicians respond to social demands.

The constant movement of social action leads to the production of our cities through the construction and reconstruction of spaces. It can be used by architecture and urbanism as the basis for the production of knowledge. It takes continuous learning and innovation, networking, building experiences and opportunities in order to embrace new methods of operation, thus enhancing the expansion and communication between centers of research and teaching in architecture and urbanism in society.

The suggested method of action does not seek to find a solution, but to create a new tool that allows the expansion of other methodological aspects. An integration and adaptation into the method of implementation of each architect and urbanist, while at the same time allowing users of the intervened spaces, a critical and community vision, results in potential benefits. If we consider the necessary dialogical questions between man and space, we understand the intervention on the fundamentals of architecture and its production, leading to a direct benefit to man and to society in general, predicting a higher social welfare, an environmental enhancement and greater economic growth. Several faculties have created special regime courses under a special regime, the involvement of the departments of architecture and urbanism with the Department of Social Psychology, enabling the analysis and discussion on the relationship of content related to these specialties. Trying to understand in which way the human mind processes all the information from the created environment and in which way it impacts human behavior. (Souza, 1995)

The interdisciplinary strengthens communication between architects / planners and future users, making the project more qualified and participatory of everyday life bringing indispensable wealth on the person-environment interrelations and its complexity. There are many factors involved in person-environment relationships which require a large interdisciplinary effort. How one can influence the environment and vice versa. Despite the complexity of the training in architecture and urbanism, due to the technical and theoretical (artistic) aspects which imply an analytical and an avant-garde reading, May be considered a thought of reflection and lead to a spatial and environmental perception where man is considered.

Thus there would be training in communicating with users, finding participatory methods of work of an interdisciplinary team in which cultural democratization of

architecture is valued. Rivlin (2003) say that if pretty churches are unable to convert the atheists, at least they can convey a meaning, of deep aesthetic cosmic, to the non-believers.

Practical examples/Strategies

Through this study we may gain insights on the people's environmental perception of the different types of places, mainly public squares (both re-qualified and newly built).

Understanding public spaces, its functions and the consequent changes to the urban structure that sustains them.

Identifying the local inhabitants' interpretation in the design and re-qualification of these spaces, if the development and construction of the spaces forced changes in the urban structure and which were the consequences in the municipal administration.

We may consider the creation of equipment, or the creation/re-qualification of a square, present economic and social movement in the city and influence changes in the urban context itself.

Several examples of restoration of old buildings consist in attracting visitors and residents through its communication with the past, and may even bring overall benefits to the re-occupation of such spaces and buildings.

The main objective is to study the perception of a requalified square, to analyze the recovery of the several buildings that surround it, keeping its features, to analyze the possible changes in the urban net and identify their means of communication with the population, to analyze the perception that users have of a certain space is fundamental to the development of new theories that enable full support in understanding the space and its changes in the urban context.

“Environmental Nexus: And you will know us by our places” is a work made for IAPS (International Association for People-Environment Studies), for instance, study several locations, like Serra Gaúcha (Bento Gonçalves, Brazil), where spaces "perceived" as *places* and where new *places* were created that eventually they, too, will become part of a perceptual universe of the users. To revitalize the past in public spaces and associate it to the present and future, a technological concept that will bring positive results in the field of

entrepreneurial success. The relation between the old and the modern will bring huge advantages to the urban structure, revitalizing the city's public places.

Reusing the buildings inserted inside the cities leads to the reoccupation of abandoned buildings and therefore to the preservation of rural areas. These factors avoid the progress into urban areas, thus reinserting the degraded areas in a urban and social context.

Urban spaces, besides being reoccupied, become pleasant and comfortable places for people that occupy them and for those who simply use them as crossing points.

The preservation of urban buildings will turn the area sociably, culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable. Requalification aspect, implied in the edifications, attracts the memory of people as the main link in the relationship man and environment, transforming a spatial area into a place.

The environmental perception reinforces and develops a "human education" in the preservation area fundamental for the Biospheres reserves. Learn to work as one with the environment, pursuing a sustainable growth.

The pride of those who live in recovered town squares.

The conflicts and the urban problems affect ethical, social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions. Within these several factors, the thesis is focused in understanding the psychological dimension inserted in a urban factor.

Trying to understand how people chose the use of typologies for the urban space, and which mechanisms reflect that choice. How people's perception is processed about urban space and their social perception.

It is essential to understand the resident's perception of the urban areas affected by the intervention. Architects, urban planners, bureaucrats and politicians that define and create intervention areas, are not considering or even worrying about the opinions and decisions of local communities, solely prevailing their decision as exclusive and final. It is believed that positive impact will be developed with their actions, eventually leading to not considering negative impact in changing the destination areas over local communities.

It would be fundamental to understand why people have certain behaviors, how they think and through which mechanisms from the social groups they choose and define alternatives.

For us to feel we must use our senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. The concept of perception comes from these factors which, according to Chauí (1996) summarizes sensations.

It's with perception that we form our ideas, pictures and our understanding of the world that surrounds us. "Perception is the form/manner by which man feels and comprehends the environment" (Unesco, 1977), considering the cultural factors fundamental for the formation of perception.

Conclusion

Like animals, the human being needs to have markings in his territory, using references to help him guide himself. Thus, preserving his identity and creating a meaningful place. Specific characteristics are given to the space when it is adapted to one's needs.

Urbanism shouldn't be judged as a modifier mode of Human Behavior, to the point of complete transformation of the human being personality. Nevertheless, it can influence perception and spatial cognition and, therefore bring satisfaction to the individual.

Deprivation from the collective dimension, of the social culture and of their own citizenship gives rise in people's mind and in the way how they express it. Increasingly stronger isolation amounts to a urban development gradually more distant from social interaction.

There should be a comprehension of urban development, so as to understand the reason why some cities within the same timeline and during their evolution have developed differently - orthogonal mesh, radiocentric, adapted to the land morphology, etc.

Positive and negative aspects that have gradually been built in human experience within cities should be analyzed so as to understand the human mind and its interpretation before the public spaces vs. urban environment. Presenting a practical intervention example which allows a significant improvement in the relation between Person and its Environment.

With a thesis oriented towards the production of desired and necessary environmental changes, this could only be developed and created through the comprehension of social and individual behavior relationship with the environment as a whole, complete and unified. The human being must understand the importance of his fundamental role when applied to a physical environment, progressively more adaptable and with orientations towards strong positive and negative purposes.

For us to understand a city, or any other environment, we must first understand the people who live in it and all its cultural, social, economic and psychological factors.

The urban space is defined as a network of needs and uses, depending on the interests and needs of the players for its viability.

The study of perception allowed us to identify and analyze the negative factors about the physical areas, which were the object of analysis and therefore enabled us to define strategies for the implantation of positive perceptions, emphasizing beneficial social values of spatial areas. All this process must consider that each social group has different points of view, because they live different realities and different sensations, always pervading that interrogation about perception differentiations

The creation of work groups associated to environmental psychology must be considered as an effort to consolidate this area in Portugal. So as to contribute to a larger visibility and understanding about future contributions in the field regarding Portugal's environmental problems, these groups, associated to educational books, investigation and the profession itself, bring more benefits towards the sturdiness of present and future research centers..

As an architect, my interest focuses on the problems originating in the environment that has been built.

In Portugal, about 80% of the population lives in urban areas, in environment they have built. Unfortunately, a great part of the architects consider that the environment that is built, is something physically static and merely formal and don't understand that, one of, if not the greatest concern of the architects should be human existence in the built environment.

The architecture and urbanism subjects should have into consideration the understanding of the cities (environment) and of the behavioral factors that the individuals present in the relationship with those spaces, those environments reflected into physical factors (the modified natural architectural spaces). The relationship, reaction and action of the individuals with those environments, constitute a topological space, adding to its the integration of a psychological state. And with our perception about topological space, we can define a psychological space through a selective and interpretative operation.

We should have an attitude of constant concern over the human conditions on the planet, regardless of being material, objective or even subjective. Our concerns must be focused, in a broad send, in the environmental problems. We cannot limit ourselves to preoccupy exclusively with the physical-environmental changes. We must be worried also with the psycho-environmental problems, responsible by countless and profound changes in the quality of the urban life.

Finding a psychological sustainability in an urban and social environment while retaining the elements that give meaning to the urban public space and thus consolidating its urban identity.

Environmental Psychology is essential in searching and identifying the communities' perception on the conditions presented by their environment. And, these factors can help elaborating and materializing proposals on actions of Environmental Politics which, through environmental analysis methods can help to reveal values known only to experts of the researched field.

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