

MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture VI
MODULE CODE: ARC 711B1
HAND OUT No: 23

Reading:

There are many books on behaviour linked to architecture

Altman I, *The Environment and Social Behaviour*, Monterey, Brooks Cole, 1975

Blakemore C, *How the Environment Helps Build the Brain*, In – Cartledge B (ed), *Mind Brain and Environment*, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp.28-55

Broadbent G, 1975, *Design in Architecture*, David Fulton, London, 1988

Downs R M Stea D, 1973, *Image and Environment*, Edward Arnold, UK

Gibson J J, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Lawrence Erlbaum Assocs, London, New Jersey, 1986

Goffman E, *Behaviour in Public Places*, Free Press, 1966

Goleman D, *Emotional Intelligence*, Bloomsbury, 1996

Hall E T, *The Hidden Dimension*, Bodley Head, 1966

Hillier B, *Space is the Machine*, Cambridge University Press, 1996

Rapoport A, *The Meaning of the Built Environment*, London; New Delhi, Sage, 1982

Behaviour

What most of architecture leaves out of its consideration of behaviour is that whilst we can see rules and intersubjective interaction manifested in games like football and tennis we fail to understand that there is an intentionality and a willing submission (sic) to rules and judgements in most games.

Whereas Wittgenstein suggested that language was a game he gave those games no foundational truths but rather saw them as arrangements of phenomena in various ways that gave rise to patterns and used up resources and lives.

<http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/6s.htm>

Thus we can manifest our thoughts (understandings) by articulating phenomena (action using phenomena such as marks on paper, noises, shapes, forms and so on) that have loose or very strong relationships to some kind of plan or pattern and the integration of ourselves and resources into a game or concept that requires our intentional or permitted involvement or else appropriates us into it and allows us to quit or does not allow us to quit.

According to Arendt the game of existence is founded on the need for labour in order to have the basics of living, food, drink and so on, without which we die and which must be turned into work to be sustainable because she describes work as being the making that sustains labouring. Thus the opportunity for games becomes open to rules and judgements. The political part of *working* is to Arendt the need to be free to intend, permit and/or quit all of which are typically freedoms from tyrannical appropriation of our labour and our work. That is the more complex aspect of behaviour that architecture leaves out. What architecture puts in is often a desire to free people from a lack of shelter or poverty, which frankly they can do for themselves once freed from tyranny.

Architecture is about building and just as language uses one word rather than another so we put walls in one place rather than another, the fact of the wall is as arbitrary as the fact of a word so that whilst the wall has space it has no meaning until it is linked to other phenomena in a concept or perhaps more exactly in a plan. It is during these moments of **process** that architecture plays with space and the contents of space so as to provide material presence to concepts and plans.

Part of the process involves the use of behavioural concepts and plans that have acquired fixed relationships between understanding (thought) and articulation (action) that act as some analogical

causal fabric so that movements and artefacts form routines and rituals around which we place our walls and so on. However we need to reserve the right to quit such routines and ask who is the intending party and who requires the continued presence of such routines. Are we appropriating the players in a game they did not choose or even ourselves in a game that we do not choose?

Behaviourism

Most architects continue to ignore the above and use simple perceptual cue-response concepts of interactions between people and shape/form/object whatever as if the shape has meaning all by itself or as if the shape is a necessary and important part of a persons life without their agreement to such reification of the object.

The Gelernter reference covers most of the wrong kind of understanding of perception in his introduction pp.1-35 [Gelernter M, Sources of Architectural Form, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1995] referring to mind/world relationships effectively opposing soul or spirit with materiality rather than understanding that phenomena are game objects in a body/world relationship.

The game may be straightforward but it may be complex and it would be unwelcome to consider any project as a precedent for any other unless it is a pure copy of it in every respect. Since sites must vary because you cant build the same thing twice in the same place without knocking the first one down it is extremely unlikely that any two projects will ever be the same. Of course the same applies to plans, they will invariably become buildings for a different set of circumstances than those for which a plan was drawn up.

The more fundamental the plan the more likely its completed manifestation is to be a compromise.

Cultural and Social identities force compromises onto individuals so that they conform and are rewarded with sustainable patterns of existence that achieve an economy which compels people to continue to conform. As far as we can tell they are content, as Wittgenstein suggests, but we know for a fact that they are conforming for a purpose or are forced to do so out of ignorance or fear.

You can read in Gelernter pp.262-265 the introduction of environmental psychology into architecture in the 1960's in the UK. The concept used an opposition between man and environment that was based and still is based upon the concept of perception as the thinking perceiver and the world perceived. The sustainable ethic was to be a metric of behaviour linked to a logical design process. Problems rapidly developed because variations were seen as a problem rather than as inevitable and this drove environmental psychologists and architects into taylorist and fordist models or towards multidisciplinary practices which are still trying to find ways in which knowledge can be shared – most of which ignore Wittgenstein's model because they remain wedded to the metric of behaviour and logical process of design which is conducive to designing for identities but not for designing for people who think for themselves.

The move to cultural and social understanding in architecture is promising because although difficult it recognises the importance of formal game playing whilst opening the process up to informality and critical interventions that can only take place once identity is understood as rules sustained by those who are identified by them or who use such rules to identify others. Apart from the fact of pattern and plan the main analogical cause of specific identities is the link between resources and individual lives lived using them in particular ways that we recognise as technologies (declarations and procedures) in which we live as experts or agents thus perpetuating those technologies and/or an evolutionary trend often referred to as a tradition of change within an established technology.