

Reconstructing a System of Bonding with Places

Amin Mojtahedi¹, & Faraz Tajik²

¹ School of Architecture & Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, USA

² Department of Psychology, Saddleback College – Mission Viejo, California, USA

Introduction

This study is concerned with the process of interaction between the relocated person and the new environment through which the system of bonding with places is reconstructed. Moreover, the research investigates influential socio-physical features of the environment that play role in this process. These are done by addressing strategies for solving problems that people face in the process of relocation – mainly emerged from the sense of loss as well as adjustment difficulties. These strategies are addressed in three different stages of interaction; interaction in order to (i) reduce environmental stress, (ii) promote intercultural dialogue, and (iii) facilitate investment of identity and emotion.

Method

A qualitative study including interviews with a sample of international students along with participant observation was conducted in the campus of UW-Madison in the US. Studies on environmental influences on psychophysiological stress-reduction (e.g. Ulrich, 1983; Evans, 1987) and restorative environments (e.g. Kaplan, 1995) structured the framework of the research regarding the first stage. The framework as to the second stage of the interaction was shaped by several studies (e.g. Townley et al., 2011; Karl et al., 2011) on settings that are supportive of diversity. Finally, studies on place attachment (e.g. Scannel & Gifford, 2010; Lewicka, 2008), place identity (e.g. Proshansky et al., 1983; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), and meanings of home (e.g. Moore, 2000; Tognoli, 1987) conducted this research in relation to the third stage of interaction with the new environment.

Main findings

A number of themes emerged related to international students' experience of different places in the campus. The study shows students have tendency to maintain closeness to places with particular socio-physical features. Providing visual access without gaining attention, contributing to the sense of being anchored or sheltered, providing a higher degree of enclosure, not being pretentious, not being crowded, providing anonymity, being leveler, providing intimate and informal seating, providing intimate connection to nature, etc., are several of those attributes of place that can frequently be identified in participants' responses regarding their favorite places.

Abstract references

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