

The question of social potential in space use

69

Zoe Georgiadou

Abstract

This paper deals with the construction of a question on the theoretical basis of space syntax. The fieldwork concerns the interior space in buildings used for children in residential care, in Greece. It focuses on issues of social behaviour and co-presence, correlated with certain strategic choices of spatial design, and the organisational configuration of the fixtures and settings of the institutions.

The question is explored at two levels:

At the first level, it studies the relation between the practical use of interior space and the density of human presence, with empirical methods of non structured field observation, informal field observation and interviews; the checking and description of the layouts and building function; the mapping of human activities, both formal and informal; space occupancy; and the collection of background data concerning the physical ambience and atmosphere of the institutions.

At the second level the findings are associated with the basis of space syntax analysis, in order to articulate a hypothetical question that sustains them. The syntactic analysis techniques used are: the convex map representation; selected local and global connections; the concept of mean depth and justified depth map; the isovist analysis occurring in areas with high human density; and the view ability of integrated spaces from staff spaces.

The findings from this study suggest that space control is implicated in the potential drift of both qualitative and quantitative characteristics that determine everyday life in the institutional environments. Thus, although this criterion does not exist in the prevailing design guidance, it seems that it is an important variable that affects behavioural normalisation in institutional environments for children.

Keywords

children's home,
institutionalisation,
control of space

69.1

zoegeo@teiath.gr