

02

CHAPTER

THEORETICAL PREMISE

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 three theories are investigated that will assist in creating a theoretical premise to support design decisions. All three theories attempt to identify the importance of creating a place for people in an urban environment. The theories investigate the role of design and what types of relationships it can initiate within the urban environment and the built environment.

THEME 1:
Places of meaning

When discussing the concept places of meaning, it usually looks into the urban fabric and revolves around people and places. More specifically it investigates the interaction between people and places, and tries to detect what impacts a place can have on people (Hashemnezhad, et al., 2013). Today the urban fabric is influenced by past practices and theories of modernity, and urban sprawl, leaving in some cases open wastelands in the urban fabric.

“20th -century modernity has been relentlessly condemned as an iron cage of conformity and mediocrity, a spiritual wilderness of populations bleached of any organic community or vital autonomy”.
– Perry Anderson

In the quote above Perry Anderson (1984) talks about the urban fabric and the form it takes on. Implying that it is the urban fabric that shapes the built environment. He talks about the importance of concentrating on the quality of the urban fabric to try and improve the quality of urban life. In the quote Anderson explains that if urban spaces aren't able to relate and integrate to the needs of the community it therefore lacks meaning and a holistic function.

Having places that lack function and meaning are often places that are undefined, derelict, or abandoned with the result that these places become lost within the urban fabric. Unused and lost spaces frequently create a sense of placelessness, ultimately decreasing the quality of that space. Placelessness and lost urban places can be connected to safety issues in a neighborhood, and can inflict emotional damages to the daily lives of the people (Hashemnezhad, et al., 2013). Subsequently, a need for an improved urban fabric, that considers a multi-faceted approach has evolved, which concentrates on establishing a sense of place (Al-Kodmany, 2013).

A specific sense of place can have the ability to shape the quality of life in that urban environment. The idea of place is not identified as a subjective and abstract concept (Mir Moghtadaie, 2009). It is rather considered as a defined location or area that possesses a particular identity (Parsaee, et al., 2015). When a specific identity is attached to a place, it is usually because it has some meaning and relationship towards people. It is thus the sense and quality of a place that is subjective and is created based on the interactions and attachment people give to a place.

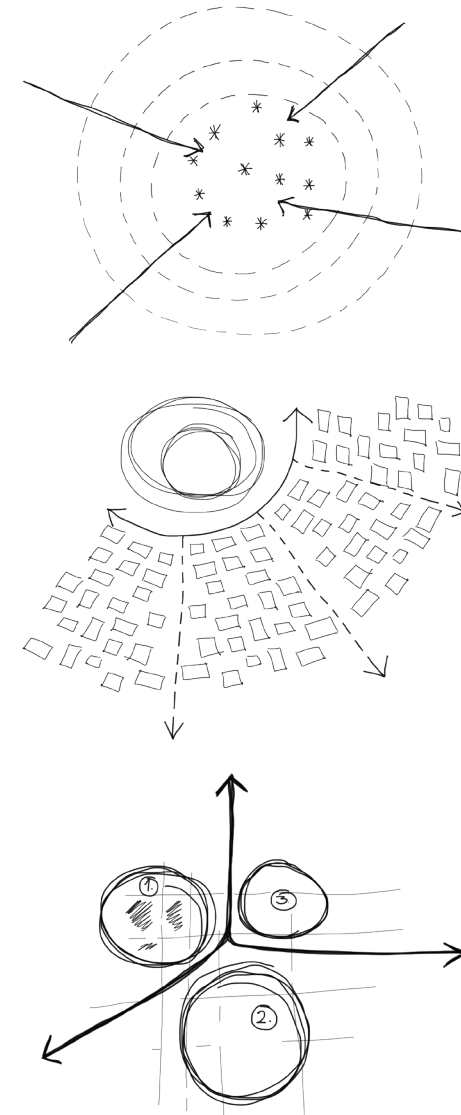


Figure 2.1: Diagrams showing the result of separation in an urban environment (Author 2020) | 15

Dimensions of interaction

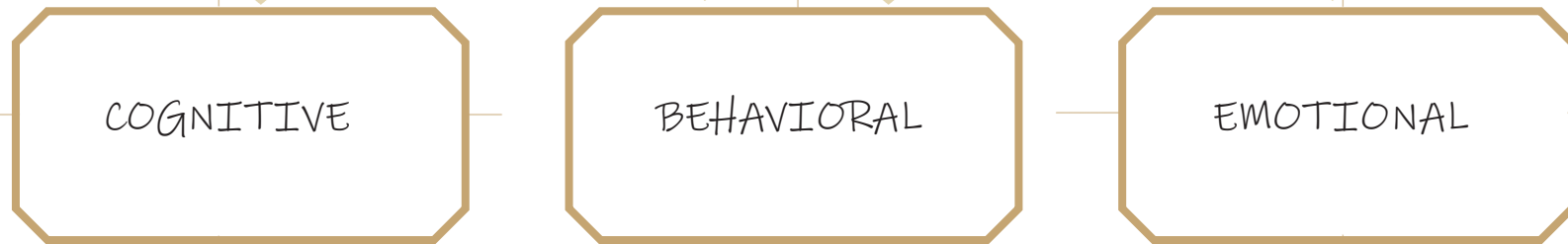


Figure 2.2: Dimensions of interaction between people and place (Author 2020)

The concept a sense of place alludes to the relationship that can exist between people and places (Qazimi, 2014). This kind of relationship often includes what impact the urban environment has on people, and vice versa, what impact people's activities have on the urban environment. It can thus be said that different forms of interaction can shape a sense of place.

According to Altman and Low (1992) three dimensions of interaction between people and place exists.

a. Cognitive: Being able to understand and easily comprehend the geometry and form of a space, which will create a stronger connection between a person and a place they are in. In architecture, sense of place can often refer to visual connections, to have people being able to visually identify when they are in a well-defined space (Lynch, 1960).

b. Behavioral: Introducing a functional, and programmatic relationship between people and places that are context specific gives a space specific behavioral characteristics (Lang, 2005).

When a space has a certain function, it tends to inform the person what activities and programs are present in this space and then speaks to what behavioral characteristics attaches to that place. Abandoned and derelict buildings often encourage behavior of trespassing and illegal activities (Arboleda, 2017), but giving a place function often leads to more liveliness of a space and positive behavioral characteristics that improves the quality of a place.

c. Emotional: Creating attachment to a place and giving meaning to a space implements concepts of ownership (Bondi, 1993) that can give a new meaning to a place, and ultimately leads to that place becoming important to that person and them forming a new emotional attachment (Seamon, 1993). If emotional attachments are established to a place it encourages people to look after that place and ensure the ongoing growth and upkeep in a good quality space.

David Hummon (1992) refers to a sense of place as the subjective perceptions that people have of their environment. He continues to say that a sense of place is more or less the

conscious feelings that people experience when they think of or find themselves in a specific place. From this it can be concluded that establishing a sense of place can have a multi-faceted approach, where it captures an emotional reaction towards the environment and establishes an interpretive perspective of the environment.

The concept to create a sense of place fuses the understanding of place and the feelings one establish about a place in the context of environmental meaning (Hummon, 1992). Using physical, cultural, and social patterns that is identified in current environments to create spaces of belonging, which can improve people's happiness, health and well-being (Bartholomew, 2018).

"A sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom... A sense of place is reinforced by what might be called a sense of recurring events."

– John Brinckerhoff Jackson

THEME 2:

Well-being through architecture

In the discussion on improving the quality of a space and creating a sense of place to improve people's happiness, health and well-being, a question arises regarding what does well-being refer to? It is a very broad concept and can be applied to a number of conditions (Paim, 1995).

“It is a state which allows individuals to realize their abilities. Cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to their community”.
-World Health Organization

In a very broad sense well-being signifies when something is in a good condition (Veenhoven, 2004). This is however not specifically explaining what is in a good condition or what was the criteria for being classified as in a good state. Veenhoven (2004) suggests that when one is referring to the term “well-being” a certain amount of clarity is needed by specifying to what the term will be applied to and what constitutes it.

Application of well-being

With regards to the application of well-being this dissertation focuses on the well-being of people. In this dissertation well-being correlates with the life activities that people engage with within a specific place. The application of well-being is intricately linked to a person's location and how they are functioning in society (King, 2007). Significant attention is given to the relationship a person has to the immediate surroundings, programs, and social interactions they find themselves in. It can be said that evidence-based research is applied to the concept of well-being, this approach is perceived as ‘objective well-being’ (Teghe & Rendell, 2005). Using an objective well-being approach implies the assumption that well-being can be dependent on a set of needs which can be identified and applied (Prince & Prince, 2001). Applying objective well-being measures offers a ‘voice’ to those that is not able to effectively articulate what their level of well-being is, this can be due to disability or age for example (Hird, 2003).

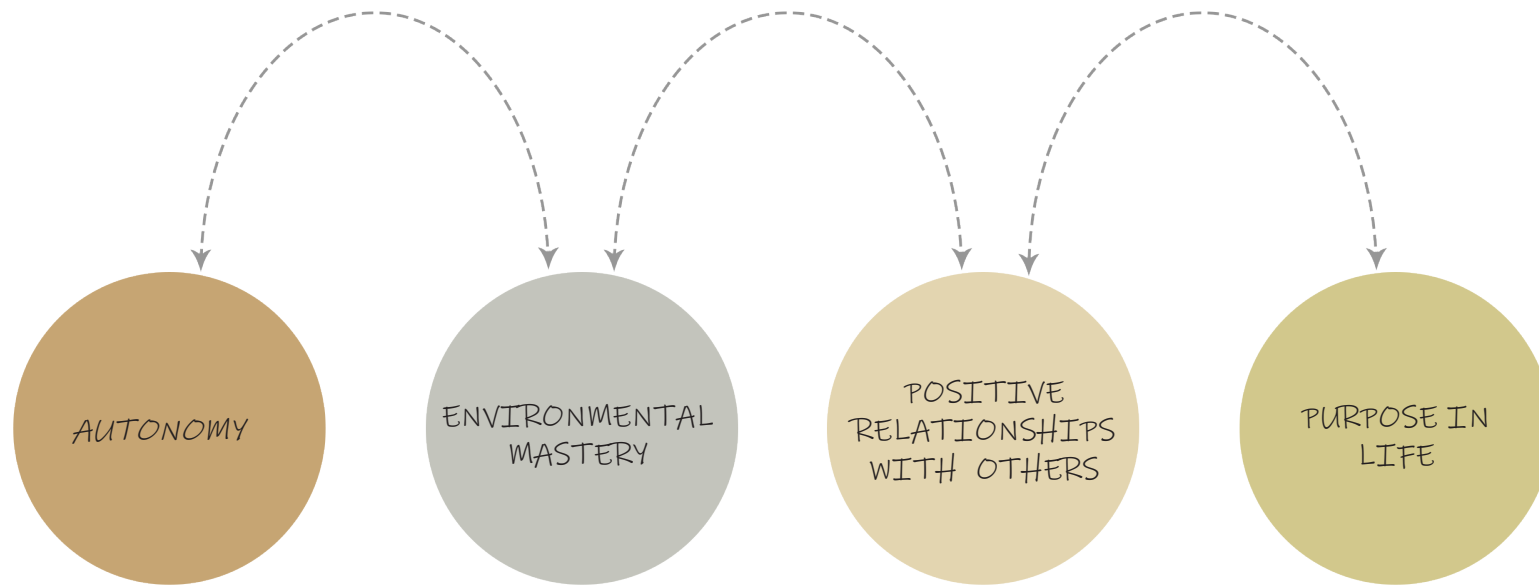


Figure 2.3: Constituting elements of well-being (Author 2020)

What constitutes wellbeing

As mentioned, an objective well-being application has been identified, it is possible that measurable statistics can be used to enable the concept of well-being into the project. Aspects that have been identified that constitutes wellbeing is based on some of Carol D. Ryff's (1989) early work.

a. Autonomy: the term refers to the idea of self-governing and independence (Collier, 2002). Enabling a sense of autonomy and allowing people to explore their own ideas and choices allows for a certain amount of satisfactory freedom over one's life and taking charge of one's own life.

b. Environmental mastery: according to Ryff & Keyes environmental mastery is "the capacity to manage effectively one's life and surrounding world". It has the capacity to control or design an adequate environment to accommodate personal needs and values. Windle and Woods (2004) reported that for elderly people living in a community, environmental mastery can play a major role in experiencing life satisfaction during any adversity.

c. Positive relationships with others: enhancing positive social relationships can create a sense of belonging which can lead to improving the mental well-being of a person (Chang, et al., 2014). According to Sheldon Cohen (2004) positive relationships with others also has the ability to improve physical well-being as a result

of enhancing immune functions. Creating settings and leisure activities that allows for interaction can help promote and encourage relationships to form.

d. Purpose in life: Having a purpose in life is often a core component in a lot of studies, to try and promote well-being. It can refer to helping people view their life as having meaning (Kim, et al., 2017). Having purpose in one's daily life has been associated with a variety of positive health behaviors, that can potentially help slow down or improve a declining state of well-being.

What does it mean to design for well-being?

People spend a majority of their time in and around buildings (Heathcote, 2018). This makes the question about can design have an effect on people's well-being rather foolish. A better question would rather be, *how much can design affect people's well-being?*

Friedam, Kahn & Borning (2006), discusses a value-sensitive design approach, explaining that this approach specifically takes value into consideration for the design. The concept of well-being can be recognized as a value, and as previously mentioned it forms part of our conception of something or someone that is in a good condition. A value-sensitive design approach argues that by knowing the users and the specific context that the design will be in

it would be possible to design for well-being (Brey, 2015). Another approach to designing for well-being is discussed by Donald Norman (2005) who argues for an emotional design approach which will contribute to the designing of well-being. Alongside Norman, Patrick Jordan (2000) claims that there should be a focus on creating designs that evoke a certain amount of pleasure and positive emotions, and that design should not only be a result of functionality and usability.

Previously the notion of autonomy was mentioned, part of this notion can also be linked to a person's capabilities. Focusing on enhancing people's daily capabilities can influence their well-being. Amartya Sen (1980) first introduced the capability approach as an approach to welfare economics, this concept has been investigated further by Martha Nussbaum. The capability approach claims that to achieve a state of well-being, people must be in the position to be able to do things or be amongst things that they find value in.

Well-being can start with a single focus or goal in mind, but it should inevitably have an impact on a person's entire state of living. A life-based design approach has been suggested by Jaana Leika (2009) that recommends that design should look at the whole of people's lives, investigating their values, circumstances, activities, and interests, and incorporating this into designs. This life-based design approach allows for a more holistic design approach to well-being.

THEME 3:

Holistic impression on design

If one is to consider a life-base design approach it essentially means to consider multiple aspects of a person's life but from a design point of view. Another way of looking at it is, trying to implement a holistic architecture.

“Holistic design takes into account the person, the device, the moment, the ethnographic environment, the physical space as well as human behavior and psychology, i.e. thinking, attitudes, emotions, motivations, abilities, triggers etc., and aims to deliver an optimal experience”.
– Miklos Philips

To incorporate a holistic architecture, is to design for not just one purpose (What is Holistic Design?, 2020). It is to consider everything from the conception to execution phase of a design. Having a holistic impression on design moves away from the isolation and segregation of spaces, instead it tries to consider how different aspects of a design can work together. It can thus be said that a theoretical premise of holistic architecture should be established to

encourage less isolated spaces and alternatively encourage more inclusive and holistic spaces. Combining holistic thinking methods includes contextually appropriate designs. Considering a place's past, current and future state. This includes investigating the surrounding environment and how a space is integrated into the greater environment. It also includes the investigation of current and future users of a space to allow for a greater meaning and urban connections to be made.

Incorporating the concept of multifaceted architecture can contribute to a holistic approach towards design. Multifaceted architecture can translate into a type of layering element, where it can be layers of history and present context, it can be the layering of language and symbols and it can be the layering of functions and programs (Morris & Kodalak, 2019). Multifaceted design is about finding a balance between what can be improved and what should be preserved. For example, improving the existing conditions and spatial performance of the site, while preserving some of the previous programmatic memories of the site.

Another form of having a holistic impression on design is through sustainable design thinking. According to Numan Abu Hammad (2017) focus should be placed on re-establishing the relationship between people and their environment. It was during the rise of the modernist movement, which was a reaction to “empirical paradigms of empires and colonization” (Marshall, 2009) that introduced plans and structures often based on zoning and population density. This ultimately led to creating barriers and challenges in today's urban fabric. This implies a shift to a new urbanism that promotes a sustainable approach when it comes to design and to move away from solitary design that only increase suburban sprawl (Abu Hammad & Abu Hammad, 2017). An important comment to make, is that the notion of sustainability cannot stand in isolation. It should be accompanied by concepts of adaptability and resilience (Abu Hammad & Abu Hammad, 2017). Architecture has a combined impact on inorganic elements, living organisms, and humans (Kim, 1998), and the objective for sustainable design is to incorporate architectural solutions that will allow for a holistic coexistence of these three groups.

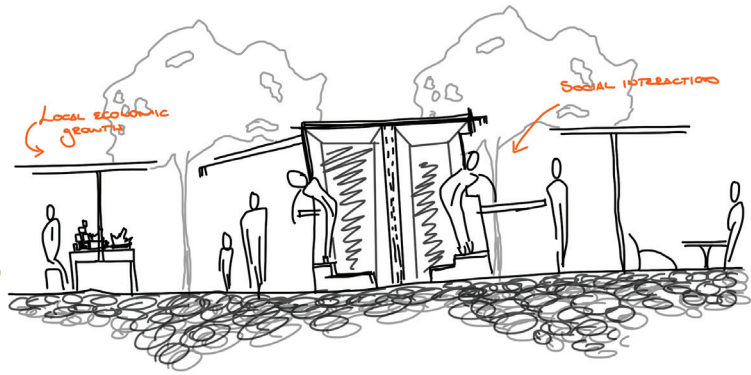


Figure 2.4: Chapter 2 diagram (Author 2020)

CONCLUSION

These theories can help assist in re-integrating and re-establishing the Kempton Park Hospital site into the urban society once more. From these theories it can be concluded that the site needs to be able to relate to the needs of the community for it to be able to be integrated back into the urban fabric. This can be made possible through functions, programs and new meaning given to the site. Abandoned and derelict spaces can be addressed by introducing new inclusive design strategies that can lead to positive characteristics that would ultimately improve the quality of the site. In essence a sense of place and identity needs to be given to the site in order to attach new meaning and importance to the site.

