

Chapter 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 concludes the investigation into a collective vocabulary of spatial definition and place-making within architectural and urban spaces. Theoretical terminology has been identified that can be used to verbally describe place. Elements for spatial definition and variables that make possible spatial modulation have been used for this purpose.

This vocabulary has been developed according to the explorations into aspects of space and place individually, but also in an integrated way. The criteria serve the purpose for both architectural and urban interior space and place. These criteria can be taken as common or collective criteria that can be used for all spatial definition and place-making projects. The criteria are practical guidelines that can be applied in the design of static physical space and the creation of place in general. The study indicates the importance of integrating the criteria in a holistic approach to achieve a strong relationship between the definition and the quality of interiors, whether architectural or urban. The importance of integration, indicates the relation that is created between the criteria.

7.2 Collective vocabulary

The investigations in the research set out to determine the relationship between criteria that can serve collectively in the application of architectural and urban interiors. The research pointed out that the sum of the aspects combined is important for meaningful definition and a sense of place. Aspects in isolation do not contribute to place; it is only in combination that the enhancement is produced. In this way enriched environments are created, providing opportunities for personalisation and interpretation. The investigations pointed out key aspects to create the relation between elements and variables to produce space and place.

Firstly, the elements, point, line, plane and volume, that define static physical space are found to be the tools for interior spatial definition of an architectural and urban nature. The composition of these as external shell is determined according to the design and composition of the defining elements. The building or urban structure must create a relationship with the interior space it encloses. The function of the space has a direct influence on the shape, size, and activities that should be provided for. The sense of place is influenced by the orientation of planes and elements in the space. The perception and experience are determined by the individual and are subjective regarding the context and surrounding spaces. The application of spatial elements can be within a three dimensional application or as two-dimensional elements within a spatial enclosure to demarcate and mark a position. The strength of the elements point and line is both in two and three-dimensional application.

Secondly, the character of these defining elements determines the degree of enclosure. The spatial quality is affected that allows for private or public space. Solid boundaries with a high density create separation from one space to another. Transparent boundaries or boundaries with a low density encourage interaction, visual or physical. The modulation and articulation of elements are created by the application of finish materials and the composition of the layout and organisation.

Thirdly, the application of finish materials indicates the relation between space and place. Texture (and colour) is included into a space, because of the characteristics of the specific finish material. The spatial enclosure is enriched with the added surface qualities and enhances the sense of place. The selection of finish materials must address the function and use to ensure an appropriate application.

Fourthly, this aspect has the capacity to change and animate spaces; it affects the quality of the place, as well as the behaviour of its users. Colour is introduced into interiors with the selection of surface materials, as well as in the foliage and flowers of plants. This natural ingredient in both architectural and urban interiors can soften spaces and add to the sense of local identity. Plants contain inherent qualities of colour

transformation throughout the year that add interest to interiors. Colour highlights spatial form and sets the tone and ambiance in combination with lighting qualities.

Fifthly, the boundaries of interior spatial enclosures should relate to human scale. Interiors are primarily concerned with the design and creation of spaces for human habitation. Urban and large architectural interiors, because of the size and scale, very often neglect the human factor and should allow for spaces that are more sensitive in this regard. The comfort and experience of the user are enhanced when human scale is applied and the overall perception of the space becomes positive.

The sixth aspect, the effect of light and shade to enhance the 'time-space' experience, is important in the creation of place. This intangible aspect has a direct influence on the spatial quality of the physical containment. The changes in natural light intensities during the day, alter the interior continually. The transition between ray of light and shadows onto surfaces, modulates and enriches space. Due to the location of urban interiors, much is left to the natural sequence of the sun and the result of time changes. Interior space must rely partly and sometimes entirely on artificial light that offers opportunities for drama in the interior. The design, when allowing for the effect of natural light in interiors, has the potential to transform spaces from static containers, to places that come alive with the movement of the sun.

Legibility of boundaries and clarity of layout is the seventh aspect. It is important that the static, physical enclosure is legible and comprehensible to the users. This allows for ease of use, as the containment is fixed. The application of point, line, plane, and volume as the elements that define the enclosure, are the ingredients to achieve the spatial boundaries.

The eighth and universal aspect that can be taken through interiors is the creation of place. Place-making brings together all the above aspects, and the elements and variables that have been discussed in the study. As a result of the integration, a relationship between the elements for spatial definition, and the variables to create place is established. The investigations on the architectural and urban interior level

showed the importance of a sense of place in giving an environment an identity that relates to the context, the use, the people and the meaning people derive from that.

7.3 Summary

The integration of theoretical terminology as criteria to define space and create place indicated a strong relationship. A holistic and integrated approach to design provides opportunities to combine elements that can be used to define the spatial containment, together with the variables that are used to modulate space and to create place. It is important to use the collective vocabulary combined within an integrated network to ensure meaning within architectural and urban interiors. The aim is to maximise the spatial experience and enrichment of the static physical enclosure.

7.4 Conclusion

The investigations and descriptions of space and place were integrated with theoretical terminology to identify the words that could be used in this process. The relationship between spatial definition and place-making has been proved by the explorations in this study. The research confirms the hypotheses that were set out at the beginning, with the fact that terminology could be combined throughout the study. The data investigated and observed pointed out that the elements for spatial definition and variables for place-making are interrelated and should have a relationship for effective spatial definition and place-making. This is strengthened by the compatibility of data from architectural and urban interiors, as the aspects could be discussed and demonstrated simultaneously. This made possible the collective use of terminology that can serve as universal criteria to be applied to achieve spatial definition and to create place.

The words as terminology have the same purpose within the architectural and urban environments and when applied create similar spatial qualities. The selection and combination of aspects therefore determine the overall sense of place. The possibilities are endless, as the function, context, socio-political and economic aspects all influence

how the static physical containment is composed and subsequently influence the spatial modulation and related meaning.

The study aimed to establish criteria that could be used to illustrate the relation between spatial definition and place-making. As a result, a set of guidelines has been developed that can be used to define space and create place within architectural and urban interiors. These criteria can now be taken into any context or anthropological environment and be applied to create enclosures for human habitation to be appropriated for added meaning that is produced by the social practices of the users. The criteria are universal and are applicable to any situation. The ultimate goal still remains, to create place!

7.5 Recommendations

Suggestions for further study include aspects that have been eliminated from this investigation that could serve as further outcomes and allow for an in-depth analysis in these areas.

The first recommendation is to further a study into the anthropological aspects of place. This investigation includes the process of applying the criteria that were developed in this study to a particular location, culture and context with the external factors, socio-political and economic, which influence the production of space and place.

Secondly, an investigation into the philosophy behind the meaning of the words used in the vocabulary can be conducted. Investigations into philosophies can include the work by Lefebvre (the use and meaning of language), Foucault (arguments on power) and Casey (ideas on space).

The third recommendation is to investigate the influence of the external factors of urban interior definition that have been excluded from this study: climate, gradient and vegetation.

Fourthly, an investigation into the pure environmental psychological aspects could demonstrate the influence that place and non-place have on people.

Fifthly, the exploration into the dynamic model of spatial production and the effect thereof on the creation of place can become an extension of this study into the static, physical model of space.

The sixth recommendation crosses the boundaries between creative disciplines and focuses the relation between articulation and definition of interior space with text and/or music. Can the written word and music also be seen as universal languages, in the same way as spatial experience and meaning within spatial and textual expression?