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Community Art Training Centre

ALEXANDRA

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It seems that Architecture has a more profound and crucial influence on people's daily lives than many other professions. In measuring its importance, one need only imagine the negative consequences of a badly designed building, space or any other architectural component in order to understand the significance of good design on people. Architecture deals with aspects of human life, and in order to be effective in fulfilling its purpose, it is duty bound to understand the psychology which drives human behaviour.

The thoughts behind the concept of the project, which will be described further on, try to combine thinkers' thoughts from different professions on which some Architectural concepts rely.

In the proposed project, I will attempt to integrate the "Hierarchy of Needs" as described by Maslow, and to be assisted by the philosophy of the "Everyday Life" as described by Lefebvre.

In his famous "Hierarchy of Needs" pyramid, Abraham Harold Maslow, an American psychologist, tried to grade human needs into five levels of importance. The basic are **physiological** needs, then **safety and security** needs, to be followed by **love and belonging** needs, after which are found **esteem needs** and finally, the highest needs are for **self-actualisation**.[1]

(1) Maslow, A. 1968. Toward a Physcology of Being.

According to Maslow, the higher one climbs in the pyramid, the better off one is. Without fulfilling the basic need, one can't proceed further, to other needs.

In light of this theory, I tried to examine the necessity of different functions and aspects in the project – as will be described further on.

In the last few decades, Architects such as Deborah Berke, Steven Harris and others tried to apply Henri Lefebvres' philosophy of the "Everyday Life" into the Architectural realm. Lefevbre, a French Philosopher, attempted during half a century (1920-1970) to define his ideas of everyday life and the nature of space, mainly in urban environments.

"What is the goal? It is the transformation of life in its smallest, most everyday detail".[(2)]

Lefebvre was very active and influential in the French urbanism in the 60's and the 70's, when he called for more centrality in the city, street life, residential participation and opportunities for spontaneity

In order to meet the community's everyday needs, the Architect's goal is to be a professional interpreter of people's needs into form and

(2) Henri Lefebvre - Critique of the everyday life, 1947

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space. He does this first, by identifying and analysing the real needs second, by interpreting them into Architectural language and third, by implementing them.

The township of Alexandra can be seen to be progressing along Maslow's hierarchy. The physiological needs are cared for in the vast effort of establishing a new infrastructure. The highest needs of self-actualisation are, at that stage, not relevant for the majority of the community.

The Art Centre then, would try to provide functions, which cater to the three - main needs according to Maslow's pyramid.

Transparent spaces encourage trust and a sense of security. Along with a gradual system of spaces – public-semi public-private, which defines the hierarchy among the functions, the need for safety and security, is fulfilled.

As a gathering place for groups and varied activities, the need for love and belonging can be reached. Self-esteem needs can be fulfilled by the creation of art, the selling and presenting of one's own products and receiving appreciation for one's work.

In terms of the "Everyday Life" philosophy, the Art Centre tries to create different types of closed and open spaces for its functions. It takes into consideration daily activities happening within the township, and creates similar but varied spaces as a platform for additional activities.

A few principles of "Everyday Life" philosophy were at the base of the design.

First, strengthening existing pedestrian movement instead of creating a new system. Second, catering to and improving domestic art activities instead of inventing new ones. Third, connecting and widening surrounding community spaces into the centre instead of creating unique and isolated spaces. Forth, using local materials instead of imported ones.

To sum up, in this unique context of community, the ability to let people feel comfortable with the Architectural outcome, relies on the consideration of their daily known patterns of behaviour. The building and the space should not be the goal but the tool to carry out people's activities, whether in private or in public.

Through the design discourse, I will try to investigate the roll of the Community Centres – assisted by the Israeli nation wide concept – within a daily local fabric of the township.

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