

APPENDIX D: PROXEMICS

[Hall, Edward T. Handbook for Proxemic Research. p.2-3]

"The study of culture in the **proxemic sense** is the study of people's use of their perceptual apparatus in different emotional states during different activities, in different relationships, settings, and contexts. No single research technique is sufficient in scope to investigate this complex multi-dimensional subject. The research technique is, therefore, a function of the particular facet under examination at the time and may call for the involvement of many disciplines. **Proxemics**, as I think of it, is more concerned with how than why, and more with form than content. The work is admittedly detailed and is apt at times to be dull and repetitious. To complicate matters, **proxemics** addresses itself to basic human situations in an area of culture that is ordinarily hidden from conscious awareness. For this reason, given the deeply interrelated nature of culture, **proxemics frequently** leads to new insights about specific cultures, as well as to insights into the generalized concept of culture itself. My thinking concerning **proxemics** is based on the assumption that all culture is ultimately an extension of basic biological processes. While man's extensions, as they evolve, may mask the underlying relationships which maintain the equilibrium of

biological systems, the relationships and systems are no less real by virtue of being hidden. **Proxemics** is the study of man's transactions as he perceives and uses intimate, personal, social, and public space ' in various setting while following out-of-awareness dictates of cultural paradigms."

"Any culture characteristically produces a simultaneous array of patterned behavior on several different levels of awareness. It is therefore important to specify which levels of awareness one is dealing with. **Proxemic Patterns**, once learned, are maintained largely outside conscious awareness, and thus have to be investigated without probing the conscious minds of one's subjects. Direct questioning will yield few if any of the significant insights."

[Hall, Edward T. Handbook for Proxemic Research. p.5]

"man shares with other forms of life a discrete set of distances (**proxemic zones**) which he maintains from his fellow men (Hall 1966). For non-contact Americans these are: intimate distance, personal distance, social-consultative distance, and public distance. Which zone is occupied at any given moment in the course of an encounter is a function of at least three sets of variables: the **transaction**, the relationship of the two persons in social system, and the feeling or emotions of both parties."

[Hall, Edward T. Handbook for Proxemic Research. p.16-18]

"the degree to which people are emotionally involved with each other is reflected in the way they use and structure space and vice versa. Not only are there spaces that pull people together (**sociopetal**) but even ways of arranging furniture that reduce involvement (**sociofugal**). Two examples at opposite ends of the involvement scale would be the north Germans and the Italians (Hall 1966).

"the investigator needs to know **sensory involvement** over time."

"By sensory involvement one means: to what degree is it possible to hear, see, smell, or feel the vibrations of movement of other human beings which are either pleasant or annoying or even bothersome and stressful. In India, for example, there is a very high level of auditory involvement at any time of the day or night, which apparently is not stressful to most Indians but frequently drives Americans to distractions."

"Everything that is known from proxemic research points to the fact that instead of something that can be summarized in feet and inches one is dealing with a kind of language involving all the senses as measured by the 19 proxemic scales.

[Hall, Edward T. Handbook for Proxemic Research. p.21]

"**Proxemics** is, by and large, a high-context field with all that that implies. The methods of gathering, analyzing, and presenting proxemic data appear to be different in degree than for language, although proxemics performs many functions comparable to language (Hall 1936b). The mere fact that all the senses are involved in distance setting means that any statement must take this fact into account. We would therefore expect to find somewhat more leeway in proxemic systems than in language. Furthermore, if proxemics is treated as though it were an information or a content science rather than a context science, the results will be ambiguous at best. The study of proxemics is best accomplished in what will be termed situational frames and as a function of action chains in these frames. It is only in situational frames that it is possible to control both information and context."

"**Proxemics**, like kinesics and language, deals with moving, structured events. This means or implies at least passing familiarity with two basic processes, (1) action chains and (2) situational frames,"

"The proxemicist ultimately has to deal with the idiosyncratic in the sense that he must transcend it, because he is not as concerned with **individual differences** as much as he is with identifying the basic **group pattern** that can be counted on to signal shifts in context."

"**Proxemics** is a synthesizing, contexting science. Like language, it reflects and is reflected in the entirety of culture. Little happens or is thought of that does not occur in a temporal and spatial frame, and that frame provides much of the context in which events occur, albeit an unspoken or taken-for-granted frame. Like culture in general, proxemics is inclusive, so it is important to have some means for being explicit - a frame of reference in which to context the research. Three concepts are necessary to achieve this goal: (a) Relationship of context to meaning; (b) Action chains, which occur in (c) Situational frames."

"**High-Context (H/C)** situations are characterized by a minimal flow of information (1) and therefore either great speed of transmission or very small channels. **Low-context (L/C)** situations are the reverse. H/C situations are quite stable and require considerable time in which to build the context either into the culture over time or into the memory drums of individuals within the culture. Nonverbal systems are high on the context scale - much higher - than symbolic systems. For example, time and space, as a rule, perform important contexting functions. It also follows that H/C cultures would attach more importance to those cultural systems, such as proxemics, that are concerned with or perform contexting functions. L/C cultures, on the other hand, will tend to minimize or to selectively disregard the contexting aspects of culture while attaching more importance to those systems that are concerned with information."

[Hall, Edward T. Handbook for Proxemic Research. p.28]

"Distance between the interviewer seated behind the desk and the subject across from him should be 'comfortable talking distance.' **This will vary with the room shape, ceiling height, and emotional state of the subject.** In all cases, the subject should be permitted to move his chair to where he feels comfortable if he shows an inclination to do so. The whole matter of position during interviews is highly critical and radically affects the results."

[Hall, Edward T. Handbook for Proxemic Research. p.38]

"The **Proxetic Notation (PN) system** deals specifically with the recording of how people use their senses in interpersonal encounters. Under ideal conditions it permits the objective (etic) transcription of sensory involvement in interactions. **Proxetic events** are the physically different events as defined in the PN system, while **proxemes** are the psychologically different, culturally patterned perceptions of those events."

"The MAIN purpose of PN, then, is to provide a tool for pinpointing and recording **proxetic units of behavior**. A simultaneous result achieved is the added awareness of any investigator trained in PN to recognize and distinguish between different modes of non-verbal communication."

[Canter, David. Psychology for Architects. p.113]

"Beyond these observations of people in public places relatively little study has been carried out of **the way in which people relate themselves to physical objects in a wide range of situation**. This is a pity because it is clear that people do not make use of their physical surroundings in a random way. Indeed much of architecture assumes that quite definite patterns will occur. For instance, it is often assumed that a particular furniture arrangement will be used in rooms and they are designed with this in mind. Many architects are surprised to find that the arrangements which seem obvious to them do not actually occur. One reason why so little study has been made of the relationships which people take up vis-a-vis their physical surroundings is the observation that much of human spatial behaviour is more readily explained in terms of the relationships people take up in respect to other people. The observations of waiting behaviour or of seat selection in a restaurant could well be re-interpreted in terms of people using the physical environment to enable them to locate themselves in a desired position with respect to the activities of others rather than simply their physical surroundings. However, it must not be forgotten that

there clearly are cases in which **people do deal with physical entities** seemingly **independently of their social implications**. One example that I have noted frequently is the fact that people waiting near bus stops in Glasgow tend to stand slightly further away from the bus stop itself than they do from one another. Informal observations suggest that while the mean distance between people is a little over two feet the mean distance people stand from the bus stop is nearer to three feet."

[Canter, David. Psychology for Architects. p.121-123]

"the relationships between patterns of human behaviour and the architectural configurations within which that behaviour takes place."

"the use of space may be considered both as determined by the people and a determiner of human behaviour. But what can we say about its role? We have seen that a simple and direct extrapolation from animal behaviour is not tenable and so we must look to other propositions which take account of uniquely human qualities, whilst still drawing upon the central principles underlying animal use of space. One possibility is that we use space as yet another medium of communication, that we use it **to indicate our feelings** of, or attitudes towards, the type of activity in which we intend to engage. In an experiment carried out by Porter et al. specifically to test this possibility with regard to **interpersonal proximity** it was not possible to show that anything was communicated at all. Thus the fact that we may be able to interpret intentions or feelings from the use of space in some situation (as Little, for instance, has shown) does not necessarily mean that we actively use space as a means of expression. A different view comes from looking at the work initiated by Festinger and his colleagues. In those studies **a person's location influenced the information he received**, the people he met and hence the friendships he made. If we accept that information is not spread evenly over the environment then the location a person is in will influence his relationship to that information. The Festinger studies showed this to be the case at the scale of building layouts. Does this interpretation make sense at the level of the smaller scale of the position of people in rooms? Certainly the relationship between **eye contact** and **distance** indicates the greater the distance between people the greater the amount of information they try to obtain by looking. It is also possible to interpret the various studies by Sommer as indicating that people arrange themselves in various positions in order **to minimise or optimise the amount of information they receive from others**. The patterns found in the studies, the places people locate themselves in space, also fits in with this information hypothesis. It fits provided we regard it as information balance, **control over interaction, that people are trying to achieve** when locating themselves at the periphery in restaurants,

say, or near to pillars in public waiting places. Accepting then that one of the major roles of human spatial behaviour is to control the quantities and quality of interaction in which a person will take part, what are the general implications for design? One important implication comes from dismissing the analogy with animals. When designers accept this analogy there is a tendency for them to cast the users of their buildings in a subordinate role, as of a dog to its master. There is a tendency for them to assume that they know the hidden, innate forces which determine what people do and that they can thus manipulate these forces without the users being aware or being able to respond any differently than the designer wishes. Casting the user in an active role, trying to find a situation which optimises the balance between the communications, or information, which he wants to receive and which he wants to give, forces the designer to think more carefully about the people who will be using his building. **Why they will be there.**"

[Johnson, Susan and Marano, Hara Estroff. Attachment: The Immutable Longing for Contact. p.36]

"The expression of emotion is the primary communication system in relationships; it's how we adjust to **closeness and distance.**"

"We seek close physical proximity to a partner, and rely on their continuing affections and availability, because it is a survival need. What satisfies the need for attachment in adults is what satisfies the need in the young: Eye contact, touching, stroking, and holding a partner deliver the same security and comfort. When threatened, or fearful, or experiencing loss, we turn to our partner for psychological comfort."

[Craik, K. H. The Comprehension of the Everyday Physical Environment. p.34]

"many **reactions to the nonhuman environment** are subtle and are neither customarily nor easily talked about in everyday discourse. These procedures, therefore, entail unusual modes of responding to environmental displays. If the **subtlety of reactions to the everyday physical surroundings** has been one factor in hampering the development of behavioral science research in this area, as it indeed should be able to make a contribution. Responses are, after all, the business of the psychologist."

[Alexander, Christopher. A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction. p.887]

"Our experience has led us to an even stronger version of this pattern - which constrains the shape of ceilings too. Specifically, we believe that people **feel** uncomfortable in spaces like these: Rooms whose ceilings can make you uncomfortable. We can only speculate on the possible **reason for these feelings.**

It seems just possible that they originate from some kind of **desire for a person to be surrounded by** a spherical bubble roughly **related to** the human axis. Room shapes which are more or less versions of this bubble are comfortable; while those which depart from it strongly are uncomfortable. Perhaps when the space around us is too sharply different from the imaginary social bubble around us, we do not feel quite like persons. A ceiling that is flat, vaulted in one direction or vaulted in two directions, has the necessary character. A ceiling sloping to one side does not. We must emphasize that this conjecture is not intended as an argument in favor of rigidly simple or symmetric spaces. It only speaks against those rather abnormal spaces with one-sided sloping ceilings, high apexed ceilings, weird bulges into the room, and re-entrant angles in the wall."

[Thiel, P. Notes on the Description, Scaling, Notation and Scoring of Some Perceptual and Cognitive Attributes of the Physical Environment. p.601]

"Gibson (1947) divides the range of everyday **space experience** into two groups: aerial space and local space. He describes these as follows: '**Aerial space** may be defined as the visual surroundings extending away from the observer and bounded in any direction by the horizon, the surface of the earth and the sky. It may be distinguished from local space primarily by its voluminousness and long range of distances. **Local space** is the kind to which we are accustomed; it is enclosed by walls and restricted in range by them. Even out of doors in a civilized environment the spatial scene is cut up and confined to localized areas by buildings and other objects which obliterate the horizon...' He also points out that 'persons who are adapted to going about and making the ordinary judgements of distance in the city are usually misled by the extent of distances in the desert, mountains, on water or from a plane. Generally, aerial distances are poorly estimated by such persons because they are unfamiliar with the visual cues present in the situation for space perception...' In view of the difficulty of estimating distances accurately, especially larger distances, it is advantageous to have a means of denoting a dimension by bracketing it within a range with an upper and a lower limit. Such a system should possess narrow limits for the smaller, more easily estimated distances, and wider limits as the distances grow larger and more difficult to estimate precisely. As a matter of convenience **a series of zones**, identified 0, 1, 2,...10 may be suggested, with the range limits for each zone as in the accompanying table. These range dimensions are derived from a logarithmic scale based on points at 6 feet and 15,000 feet. The average ratio between successive dimensions is about 2.4. (The dimensions have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.)"

"6 ft. is a minimum dimension for a **habitable space**. 7-12 ft. is a distant phase of **social-consultative**

distance (Hall, 1963). 40 ft. is the limit for **discerning facial expression** (Spreiregan, 1965). Far phase of **public distance** begins near 30 ft. (Hall, 1963). 80 ft. is the limit for facial recognition (Spreiregan, 1965).

Medieval city squares average 190 x 465 ft. (Sitte, 1945). 450 ft. is the **limit for discerning action** (Spreiregan, 1965). Maximum distance, for **seeing people** is 4,000 ft. (Spreiregan, 1965). 15,000 ft. is **horizon distance** for 5 1/2 ft. eye height (U.S.H.O. Pub. 111B)."

[Heider, Fritz. On Perception, Event Structure, and Psychological Environment. p.69-70]

"Of primary importance for all theories is the question whether distal or proximal data are used as the focus in the determination. One can treat perception and action either in terms of the **distant object** (perception functions in such a way that the distant object is 'attained'; the organism moves toward the food, etc.); or one can treat it in terms of **proximal influences** and effects, that is to say, in terms of processes close to the skin, stimuli, muscle contractions or movements of the limbs."

"These theories fall into two groups. One group stresses perception; to it belong the older theories of perception which emphasized the stimulus-oriented sensations. The other group tests the psychological processes more from the point of view of action and motor phenomena; to it belong the stimulus-response theories. It is easy to see that these theories get their vitality from the general tendency to use proximal determinants and not from observation; observation favors distal determinants much more. The exponents of these theories want to relate psychological processes to the actual concrete influences **which organism and environment exert on each other**. The most important arguments against these theories can be reduced to a single point: observation shows that often distal determination is possible where proximal determination is impossible. Von Kries, Becher, Ehrenfels, and the Gestalt theory used this argument against the older theories of perception; different teleological systems (McDougall, etc.) used this argument against stimulus-response theories. Indeed, the most important problem for all theories using proximal determinants is to show that it is possible to establish that system of determination as the independent one, and further that it is possible to derive from that system the existence of relevant distal determinants, which are found in observation, and to treat them as only apparently relevant determinants. The device which is almost exclusively used for this derivation is selection. There is the infinite number of possibilities of bonds of association or conditioned reflexes between any stimuli and any response. **Contact with the environment establishes or strengthens only a limited, selected number of these bonds**. Selection works in such a way that distal determination, that is to say, correspondence to the

objects of the environment, is brought about. However, very often the derivation of distal from proximal determination is effected by the surreptitious substitution of distal for proximal terms."

[Heider, Fritz. On Perception, Event Structure, and Psychological Environment. p.77-78]

"The theory of tropism, as it is presented by Crozier and Hoagland (1934), coordinates 'stimuli' with 'orientation,' that is to say, direction which is determined in relation to the environmental space. Not what is closest to the skin-muscle contractions or movements of the limbs is taken as the focus, but an effect, an achievement of the movement of the limbs. Thus this theory goes a step beyond pure proximal determination. **Determination by orientation** lies between determination by the movements of the organs and distal determination in terms of the objects of the environment. From the following quotations it will be clear that the authors distinguish sharply between proximal determination and determination in terms of orientation, and that they do not think that the second can be reduced to the first. Since the anatomical basis for such actions is quite different in diverse organisms, but the behavior element dynamically identical, it is clear that the quantitative formulations arrived at refer to the behavior, and not to specific accidents of structure...(Crozier and Hoagland, 1934, p.6). The 'anatomical basis' and 'accidents of structure' are proximally determined entities; the 'dynamically identical behavior element' refers to orientation."

[Downs, R. M. and Stea, D. Image and Environment: Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior. p.16-20]

"Locational information is designed to answer the question, Where are these phenomena? and leads to a **subjective geometry of space**. There are two major components to this geometry, distance and direction. Distance can be measured in a variety of ways, and we are surprisingly sensitive to distance in our everyday behavior. The claim that 'it takes you only half an hour to go and get it' will perhaps receive the reply that 'it's too far to go.' We think of distance in terms of time cost, money cost, and the more traditional measures, kilometers and miles. Knowledge of distance - **the amount of separation between pairs of places and pairs of phenomena** - is essential for planning any strategy of spatial behavior. Geography, for example, has developed a series of models of human spatial behavior which depend upon the individual's sensitivity to distance variations and upon his assumed goal of minimizing the distance traveled either by himself or by his products. Direction is no less important in the geometry of space, although **we are less conscious of directional information**. We take direction more for granted than we perhaps should. It is only when we cannot find a map in the glove compartment of the car and become

lost that the need for directional information becomes acute. The person who 'gives' directions by pointing vaguely and saying 'it's over there' is no more helpful than one who says 'it's on the left' - we need to know whose left. By combining distance and direction we can arrive at locational information about phenomena."

"Thus, locational information is not as simple as it might appear. We must store many bits of distance and direction data to operate efficiently in a spatial environment, a process involving relatively accurate encoding, storage, and decoding. Use of locational information in formulating a strategy of spatial behavior, however, requires a second type of information: that concerning the attributes of phenomena. Attributive information tells us what kinds of phenomena are 'out there,' and is complementary to locational information, indicating what is at a particular location and **why anybody would want to go there**. An attribute is derived from a characteristic pattern of stimulation regularly associated with a particular phenomenon which, in combination with other attributes, signals **the presence of the phenomenon**. A concrete example will clarify this definition. Imagine that at the end of the search process specified in the drive-in theater example you are confronted with something that you 'recognize' consisting of a large open space surrounded by a wall with an enormous screen at its far end, a small building at a break in the wall, and lots of teenagers driving in and out in cars. Obviously, it is the drive-in movie theater that you were searching for, and the screen and teenagers can be considered attributes of the phenomenon 'movie theater.' You can interpret the **pattern of stimulation (visual in this instance)** as indicating a series of attributes that, in this combination, signal the presence of a drive-in theater. We can divide attributes of phenomena into two major classes: (1) descriptive, quasi-objective, or denotative; and (2) evaluative or connotative. The attributes listed as signaling the presence of the drive-in all belong to the first type, while attributes such as 'reasonable prices,' 'good shows,' or 'easy to get in' are **evaluative or connotative**. Here, we are separating attributes which are affectively neutral (descriptive) from those which are affectively charged (evaluative). This process of evaluation involves a **relationship between a phenomenon and its potential role in the behavior of the experiencing individual**. What is the relationship between an attribute and an object? An object is identified and defined by a set of attributes and bits of locational information. However, what is an object at one spatial scale can become an attribute at another."

"By the distortion of cognitive maps, we mean the cognitive transformations of both distance and direction, such that an individual's **subjective geometry** deviates from the Euclidean view of the real world. Such deviations can have major effects upon the patterns of spatial use of the environment. In

terms of the distance distortions, Lee (1962; 1970) has indicated that, given two urban facilities equidistant from an urban resident, one located on the downtown side is considered closer than the one which is away from the city center. If people are sensitive to distance, consequent **spatial behavior patterns will be dependent** upon such distance distortions. Far more significant, and as yet little understood, are the results of schematization. By schematization we mean the use of cognitive categories into which we **code environmental information and by which we interpret such information**. We are, as Carr (1970, p. 518) suggests, victims of conventionality. This conventionality may be expressed in two ways. The first involves the use of those spatial symbols to which we all subscribe and which we use both as denotative and connotative shorthand ways of coping with the spatial environment. Thus, we all understand (or think we understand) the intended, value-loaded meanings of 'Africa the Dark Continent,' 'Europe the Center of Culture,' 'Behind the Iron Curtain,' and 'The Midwest as the Heartland.' Symbols (often mythological), such as the Western route to India and the search for the Northwest Passage, have had major effects upon the course of history. In general, such symbols deal with large spatial areas and are subscribed to by a large part of the population."

"A second aspect of schematization or conventionality involves the very limited set of cognitive categories or concepts that we have developed in order **to cope with information derived from the spatial environment**. As we were recently told, 'once you've seen one slum, you've seen them all.' Are all older center-city areas 'slums' to middle-class whites or do they have more sophisticated cognitive categories? Our understanding of the semantics (or vocabulary) of cognitive maps is remarkably limited."