SCHOOL AND SPACE APPROPRIATION

Socio-spatial effects in the school space

Francisca Mendonça
up201405921@up.pt | FAUP | Portugal

André Santos
amsantos@up.pt | FAUP-CEAU | Portugal

Virgílio Borges Pereira
jpereira@etras.up.pt | FLUP | Portugal

INTRODUCTION

Architecture is indissolubly linked to human and social dimensions, especially school buildings, having embody the place where the teaching-learning process is developed. The school environment has a determinant role in the personal development of each individual, as it represents the most persisting experience of life in community. The present work seeks to deepen the human side of the recent architectural transformation of Portuguese school buildings led by Parque Escolar, as it analyses the space appropriation process, as well as it interprets its interferences with the users’ needs. The users’ interaction process in the context of school is considered a relevant subject for discussion. This study is embedded in the investigation project named ESCOLAS: Complexidade e Interpretação (CEAU-FAUP).

AIM

The primary goal is to characterize, analyse and compare school buildings, by relating the modernization projects from the topic of space appropriation. The aim is to understand the socio-spatial effects within the schools environments.

METHODOLOGY

After creating a knowledge foundation based on literature that reunites the field of Architecture, Anthropology and Sociology, it was possible to shape a critical position to deal with problem in cause, as well as to define criteria for the schools’ analysis. Subsequently, an examination of 74 schools was carried out, according to specific parameters that focus on the following 6 topics (schemes on the right). This analysis enables the selection of 3 case studies, followed by a survey that addresses students, professors, staff, parents and their relationship with school. This inquiry will be the main pillar of support for the comparative study of these 3 schools.

RESULTS

Even though the investigation is not yet finished, we can already take into account some important observations. Both the photographed record and the school visits allowed us to recognize that users are remarkably ready to the personalize different spaces, and they actually have that need to feel more connected with the school they inhabit. We use the term ‘inhabit’ precisely because, as a community workplace, school facilities represent a place of habits and different ways of life. Therefore, whatever is the cultural or geographic condition of each school, we observed that not only the students demonstrate a great pleasure to expose their works and transform space, but also the staff enjoys a lot installing different vegetation types or preserving the antique furniture. Furthermore, we also noted that users are not fearful to ‘correct’ the spaces which aren’t responding to their expectations, so they voluntarily adapt it to their routines and activities according to their will. This is evidently linked to the space’s flexibility and, of course, not all of the schools have this characteristic, which makes the user’s actions conditioned by space.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As agents of socialization and growth, the school institution represents the environment where the teaching-learning process should be enriched by spatial features. Most people remember their school as a second home, and that’s only possible when architecture also contributes to foster the senses of belonging, identification, personalization and cultivation. Through these actions the space is transformed and completed, which consequently strengthens its identity, memory and value.

“I [Architecture] is an art, however it is an unfinished art. It needs something to stand on it. We need life to finish architecture. Only then it is completed and has its significance.”

Manuel Aires Mateus