

Public Settings of a Neighbourhood: Identity and Symbolism

*Kaj Noschis
Département d'Architecture
Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale
12, av. de l'Eglise-Anglaise
1001 Lausanne
Switzerland*

Summary

The identification of inhabitants with their neighbourhood as well as the symbolic meaning of public places within a community are herein discussed. Reference is made to a participant-observer study of a working-class neighbourhood on the outskirts of Venice (Italy). An attempt is made to define explicitly the affective bonds between people and public settings of their habitat, as these can be daily experienced despite an architecturally rudimentary environment. The analysis moves from thoughts on the observer's emotional involvement in his study to a discussion of the conditions necessary for attributing a general value to the conflicts felt by him in these settings. Identity provides a *typified* description for constructing a bridge between the observer and the observed within specific contexts.

Résumé

Tant l'identification des habitants avec leur quartier que la signification symbolique des lieux publics pour une communauté sont discutées dans cet article. Il y est fait référence à une étude d'observation participante d'un quartier ouvrier à la périphérie de la Venise historique. Une tentative est faite pour définir explicitement les liens affectifs entre les habitants et leurs espaces publics - tels que ces liens sont quotidiennement éprouvés dans un contexte architecturalement pauvre. L'analyse est développée à partir d'une réflexion sur l'implication émotive de l'observateur dans son étude. Les conditions permettant d'attribuer une portée générale aux conflits qu'il a pu ressentir dans les lieux étudiés sont également discutées. L'identité fournit une description *typifiée* pour construire un pont entre observateur et observé dans des contextes spécifiques.

1. Introduction

This paper ¹ is based on observations of life in public places and offers some clues as to how everyday life in neighbourhood surroundings is emotionally meaningful.

Feeling is a commonly used, emotionally loaded term used in discussing architectural as well as urban space. Among important authors, Langer (1953) provides an extensive and thorough philosophical discussion of how one can feel about

¹ Writing of this paper was made possible by Funds of Dr. Donald Cooper allocated to the author by the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, for which the author expresses his gratitude. With the exception of one recent and very topical book, references are limited to titles (even if they are not very updated) that we "lived with" during the study itself. Our approach of the topic hopefully justifies this procedure.

spatial forms, stressing in particular the visibility of an ethnic domain through symbols, whereas Jacobs (1969) shows how urban street life conveys most vividly the "experiential" qualities offered by particular environmental contexts. A frequently explored venue for investigations of the quality of place are environmental perception and attitudes. Yi-Fu Tuan's (1974) historically and interculturally rich discussion of the issue is noteworthy here, dealing as it does with the affective bonds between people and places. Recent contributions include those of Seamon & Mugerauer (1985). The above mentioned works share an emphasis on the emotional ties between people and their environment. It is also the present study's main concern². Herein, it is assumed that the affective bonds between a neighbourhood and its inhabitants define its "quality of place".

Identity as well as the symbolic meaning of an environmental setting are concepts used to organize our discussion.

2. Identity

Identity is a well known and extensively applied concept even in studies of man's relationship with his environment. For instance, identity, or more precisely place-identity as discussed by Proshansky (1978), refers to conscious as well as unconscious ties between the city and its dwellers as these develop in time. Herein, a similar viewpoint will be maintained. Another seminal contribution to the concept's richness has been added by a seminar conducted by Levi-Strauss (1977) where identity's ethnological, sociological as well as anthropological credentials are particularly explored, the concept itself remaining a "virtual focus, useful as a reference for exploring certain facts, although without an actual existence" (id. p. 232 - our translation). beside such topical instances of identity's use, the concept has widespread psychological applications and plays a pre-eminent role in some of the psycho-analytic literature. Erikson (1956) has devoted a crucial essay to the formation and growth of personal identity in relation to other figures, and in particular, parental figures. The neighbourhood in that study is acknowledged as a provider of roles to the youngsters in search of a more stable personality. Erikson stresses the relationship between the group and the individual involved in this attainment, as well as the relation between continuity and change of identity.

"Ego identity, then, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and that these methods are effective in safeguarding the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others." On the other hand, "the expansiveness of civilization, together with its stratification and specialization force children to base their ego models on shifting, sectional and contradictory prototypes" (Erikson, 1959, 22-23).

If Erikson puts particular weight on the growth of identity, it is probably Freud (1921) who most clearly shows the conflictual nature of such a process - with reference to the Oedipus complex. Freud views the conflict of the child with his father as a sequential yet thoroughly ambivalent process. He stresses the processive nature of the conflict by using the term identification instead of identity.

"Identification is known to psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person (...). A little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father; he would like to grow like him and be like him, and take his place everywhere

² A lengthier study and argument have been published as a book in French (Noschis, 1984)

(...). The little boy notices that his father stands in his way with his mother. His identification with his father then takes on a hostile colouring and becomes identical with the wish to replace his father in regard to his mother as well. Identification, in fact, is ambivalent from the very first; it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal." (Freud, 1955, 105)

Let us sum this up. Firstly, the affective relationship between an individual and the group that he or she is part of has a continuity while changing in the course of time. Secondly, he or she is emotionally tempted to do away with it. This last aspect might be defined by what Jung (1959, § 82) calls *enantiodromia*, the psychological coexistence of opposites - literally running toward one's contrary. In other words one emotional state calls forth its opposite. We might add a reference to Sennet's analysis of today's urban life. He suggests that contradictory emotions are often not tolerated by adolescents because they foster a crisis of identity that most youngsters do not have the courage to sustain.

"Some adolescents do have the strength to hold themselves back, and let a diversity of painful confused and contradictory new experiences enter their lives, before they take the active steps that will confirm them in an identity. But most young people are denied the strength to endure ambiguity of this kind, and exercise their new powers to form conscious meanings and value relations to themselves about experiences they are yet to have. In this way, the experiential frame is controlled in advance: its impact on the reality a youth perceives is muffled because unexpected or painful new experiences are rejected as unreal." (Sennet, 1970, 37)

Here, Sennet is advocating the importance of contradictory experiences and emotions while noting their relative absence today. However, on the last point, our view differs from Sennet's. We propound that the daily confrontations between inhabitants observing each other in the public settings of their neighbourhood are experiences pertaining to conflicts. It is our suggestion that these fugitive and affectively charged moments are profitably included in an analysis of identity with respect to one's neighbourhood.

3. The Observer's Identity

A first crucial step is to clarify the identity of the observer himself as he or she observes life in a neighbourhood. In fact we argue that this clarification will then point to an extension of considerations such as the above mentioned ones to the inhabitants' emotional experiences.

Observational data for this study were collected during a two-month stay in the neighbourhood with the researchers being participant-observers, noting as they could activities in all public places. A year later, a shorter stay allowed us to renew our contacts with the neighbourhood³. Issues on participant observation have been frequently discussed (e.g. Junker, 1960; McCall & Simon, 1969; Filstead, 1970); many contributions on this topic underline the problem of how the researcher has to define his own attitude towards the community that he is studying. For instance, Gans (1962) in his well known study of the West End states explicitly the difficulties that he felt as a participant-observer:

³ The first set of empirical data were collected, and a separate report subsidized by Unesco was produced jointly by M.-J. Dozio, P. Feddersen, L. Chenu and the author as part of a larger research project comparing three working-class neighbourhoods. I am deeply obliged to my colleagues for their insights. My second stay in the neighbourhood was made possible by the Dr. Donald Cooper Funds.

"I found it difficult to assume the detached role of the interviewer who comes as a stranger, never to be seen again. Although I never considered myself to be a West Ender, I did think myself to be enough of a participant in the life of the area to feel uncomfortable about also being an interviewer." (p. 342)

Precisely the uneasiness felt as participant-observer is what impinges at some point on every thoroughly involved observer who necessarily ends up caring for the community that he or she is studying.

This ambiguity between someone being exterior to the neighbourhood, yet taking part in its life, generates emotionally varying states from positive attachment to estrangement and momentary hatred. Thus, the emotions of the observer while staying in a neighbourhood, particularly for a longer period of time, may be *typified* (Schutz, 1980 - see below) in terms of the tensions that were related to "identify" as mentioned above. For the observer it is his or her own identity with respect to the neighbourhood of study that is thus under scrutiny. Subsequently the question becomes one of extending such a *typification* to the people observed.

This matter needs careful examination as a methodological issue.

Schutz (1962) has raised and discussed problems of the methodological foundations of social sciences showing the steps involved in "transforming" current everyday interaction into its scientific analysis. Schutz limits his considerations to cover rational social behaviour and its formalization, whereas we are going to extend this discussion to emotional involvement. Schutz follows Max Weber closely. Weber concentrated on analyzing behaviour that is rational (*zweckrationell*) or as Schutz puts it "behaviour oriented to a system of discrete individual ends" (Schutz, 1980, 18). However, Weber distinguished three other categories of social behaviour as well - *wertrationell*, *affektuell*, *traditionell* (Weber, 1957, chap. 1) - recommending that they be analyzed as "perturbations" of the first category.

Our proposal here is to go beyond Weber and Schutz and to analyze according to Schutz's insights also the other categories of social behaviour named by Weber, in particular the one of feeling. Although we are on weak ground with respect to scientific legitimacy, we can obtain clarity by rendering explicit the involvement of the researcher in his observations as well as his further descriptive and analytical steps.

According to Schutz the aim of comprehensive sociology as advocated by Weber is to discover the subjective meaning of actions, i.e. the meaning they have for the actors themselves. Actions - as a form of behaviour oriented toward its projected execution - might be understood along different lines, the one discussed by Schutz refers to their rational meaning. In discussing the meaning attributed to an action, Schutz (1962) suggests that in the case of everyday activity the meaning in terms of which it is commonly interpreted is its motives. Two sets of motives are to be distinguished: the purpose for the realization of which the action is a means (the *in-order-to*-motive) and its reason or past cause (the *because*-motive). However, if we want to consciously relate our action to its *in-order-to* and *because* motives, we have to step outside the action itself and reflect on it. Thus in the case of oneself in order to give a meaning to what is going on, this is only possible *ex post* and *ex ante*. The situation is different if we observe the action of someone else we are interacting with. In this case we give the observed action a meaning while it is being carried out. We share an immediacy with this action. It is understandable to us not only in terms of its motives past and future. There is a sense of sharing *hic et nunc* what is taking place. This is possible because actions - ours as well as others' - become *typical* through repetition. Observed actions become *typical* as they usually occur in conjunction with particular *because*

and *in-order-to* motives. Thus it is by way of *typification* that we construct meanings and share them with others.

Now *typification* is also what is done by scientists. Typification constructed by scientists contains only such motives as are common to (almost) all actions of a general class. Besides, in the case of typification by scientists, specific formal criteria are added.

Typification is a process that can attain a very abstract level. In the process - and particularly in scientific discourse - precisely observed actions lose touch with the specific circumstances in which they first occurred and get an exemplary role. Yet, as we noted, types remain crucial also for the shared understanding of everyday activity and specifically this is precisely what enables us to give meaning to others' actions.

Now this, we suggest, is also how we can approach feelings. Feelings might also be understood in terms of their motives. For instance this is how we can view our previous discussion on identity. What can be called typical - namely the conflict between continuity and change, tenderness and removal - might be seen as a gradually evolved elaboration on motives relevant to everyday observational data. Thus, a typification such as the one contained in our discussion of identity might prove its adequateness with respect to a neighbourhood by providing a description of both: a) the observer's own feelings while he observes others as well as his simultaneous conjectures on the feelings of others, as these relate to a specific spatial context, b) feelings that are shared by the observer and the observed in the same context.

Let us consider the *observer* in the neighbourhood. Besides his or her rational pursuits, in which respect typification - that do not interest us here - may also be defined, the observer experiences an affective relationship with the environment that he or she is confronted with daily. If we examine the *feelings* of the observer in terms of their typicalness, we may note that the observer ties them to his general past experiences, prior to his entering the neighbourhood, yet also, and increasingly so, with the length of his stay, to the local specificities that he is confronted with especially as these encounters are daily repeated. Thus we might say that the ensuing affective typification contains, on the one hand, something highly abstract - associated with the observer's cultural background as well as personal history - and on the other hand something increasingly tied to the neighbourhood. An expression of this typification is the emotionally opposite states that we discussed under the label of identity: this term would reflect generally the existence of an affective involvement between the observer and the neighbourhood that he or she is observing. This is an abstract typification that has gradually acquired a general plausibility within our cultural context. The more specific components of the affective typification under discussion are emotions related to the recurring circumstances that these affective states are connected with - in other terms the "locale" and the people that the observer confronts, comprising all specific characteristics.

In terms of the observer's motives of his emotional experiences connected with his activity of observation, the "*because*" motives are to be sought in this intermingle of general and specific site-tied feelings, whereas the "*in-order-to*" motives are related with the desire to get closer to an understanding of the meaning of the neighbourhood for its inhabitants.

The question which might now be posed is one about the relevance of such typifications for the understanding of the neighbourhood. In fact this relevance is immediately apparent if we can attribute what we have said about the observer himself or her-

self to the inhabitant. Let us examine this with respect to Schutz's remarks about motives of action.

Others' activities, contrary to one's own, might be understood in simultaneity while they are taking place. As Schutz points out this is done by making reference to oneself. However, in order to attribute to someone observed the kind of feelings that we have evoked for the observer himself, there is the particular difficulty that affective states are not observable to the same extent as actions. We have however tied the typification taking place to a specific observable activity, namely standing, sitting, meeting others, waiting or walking in a specific context and to characteristics of the site and events occurring there.

Thus affective typification might be related to "*because*" motives of emotional states that might be subsumed to operate in observed people *while they are observing still others in specific circumstances*. These are ideal types that the observer can make explicit and describe as moving from his or her own feelings to encompass local cues - tied to the local history - as well as exemplary cultural references at the most general level. They are attributed to the inhabitant as fostering affective bonds and states with respect to his or her neighbourhood as he or she stands in a public setting observing it. As the relation between overt and covert activity is difficult to establish, such typified constructions are necessarily limited to concern those moments when inhabitants are observing others and, in particular locales, *are sensitive to their own feelings*.

With this in mind, the observer can propose a typified description of a public setting in a neighbourhood and attempt a verification by discussing it with the inhabitants - the observer should discuss this in particular with the people whom he/she has seen watching others or he/she should discuss this while observing them. Without yet reaching scientific rigour, the proposed typification becomes plausible when it is shared by those observed and the approached.

This is how far our study has been taken and this is - as we see it - how observational data might provide an assessment of how everyday life in public places of a neighbourhood is emotionally meaningful to its inhabitants.

Let us recall that if such brief moments are worthy of an extensive investigation it is because they concurrently concern those instants when the inhabitant is sensitive to his or her neighbourhood, that is when its architecture is also important for sustaining affective bonds. Besides, this procedure is perhaps not very far from how a sensible architect would observationally approach a context where he is to intervene.

4. The Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods are difficult to define, conceptually as well as in practice. For instance Keller (1968) has extensively discussed the multiple dimensions involved in analyzing neighbourhoods, and Strauss (1961) among others has surveyed the different realities that the term conveys even for inhabitants from a geographically close area. However, in general, people of a socio-economical group tend to be clustered and thus give consistency at least to a sociologically defined neighbourhood (Suttles, 1972).

Without questioning the above mentioned studies, it has become evident from the preceding discussion that the term, as we intend it, covers something pre-eminently psychological and even further - something that has mainly an imaginary existence.

In fact, without dismissing the geographical limits of the specific neighbourhood that we studied, nor ignoring its sociological homogeneity - that we explicitly wanted -, the term in our present discussion refers generally to what the observer (and inhabitant) is confronted with in observing defined public settings that a group of

inhabitants share. The neighbourhood is the group of people who meet in a specific place and is generally the cumulative settings where such confrontations take place. The reference of the term neighbourhood is to an imaginary reality as it fosters emotions in the observer and inhabitant - being at times attractive, at times hostile, yet with continuity.

This definition of a neighbourhood is adequate when wanting to study the affective bonds within a defined area. Sacca Fisola, the neighbourhood that we have studied, is a working class community of 2500 inhabitants covering an island opposite the historical centre of Venice, where defining the boundaries of the neighbourhood poses no problem. All inhabitants share a perception of the limits that coincides with the surface of the island. The community is sociologically homogeneous, of similar cultural background and family structure. Previously uninhabited, the community was built between 1955 and 1960, as a subsidized housing scheme for young Venetian couples. The architecture does not resemble that of Venice. The four-storey housing blocks are of the "bare essential" type and most of the programmed social infrastructures - except for a school-building and a church - have never been built.

5. The Symbol

Jung (1958b) defines the symbolic view as one "which interprets the symbolic expression as the best possible formulation of a relatively unknown thing, which for that reason cannot be more clearly or characteristically expressed" (§ 815). Thus, as Jung (1958a) also puts it, "symbols make the irrational union of opposites possible" (§ 755). Although most authors, when considering the affective relationship between people and their environment do talk about symbolism, the adopted views are rarely explicit as to how one is specifically to use it for analyzing data. The confusion surrounding this issue is well described by Olivier (1975).

By tying Jung's definitions of symbolism to the preceding discussion on identity, one approach to the symbolic meaning of the environment is explicitly defined. Those settings which sustain a continuity while fostering opposite affective states, from emotional participation to strong repulsion, are symbolically meaningful as conducive of identity. When such tensions between "I love this place" and "I hate this place" are generated in public places of the neighbourhood, these settings might be defined as symbolic supports for the inhabitants' identity with respect precisely to their neighbourhood.

One point needs to be added particularly with respect to working class neighbourhoods that are usually poorly developed from an architectural and planning point of view. Lack of resources impedes recourse to explicit symbolic devices in building such environments where "essential functional criteria" have priority. However, it is not the lack of symbols or symbolic artifacts as such that should make one refrain from looking for the eventual symbolic loading of - for example - a public place in such a neighbourhood. As for instance Jaeger & Selsnick (1964) have noted:

"Sometimes an experience is so deep and moving that its emotional qualities spread out and pervade all that surrounds it and is related to it. In this way, some sensuous correlate of a significant event becomes a symbol of it and is capable of evoking response to itself. Perhaps the most important illustration of this is the capacity of a geographic locale to symbolize an event associated with it." (p. 663)

Rapoport (1972), discussing the life and habitat of Australian aborigines, maintains a similar viewpoint and calls it "humanization" of their landscape, where



Fig. 1 & 2 Arcades in Sacca Fisola. When it is calm the shopkeepers themselves will sit next to the shop entrances. Children will use the flat and protected surface under the arcades for playing - mothers for meeting and talking.

Fig. 1 & 2 Arcades à Sacca Fisola. Aux heures calmes les vendeurs des magasins se tiendront devant l'entrée de leur boutique. Les enfants utiliseront la surface plane et protégée sous les arcades pour des jeux - les mères pour s'arrêter et discuter.

"material" symbols are substituted for example by ritual or by frequent returns to the same place. In Sacca Fisola, built on the outskirts of the historical city of Venice, the poor explicit symbolism of the neighbourhood stands in clear contrast to the richness of symbolism in the historical centre of town.

If we now connect this approach to symbols with the preceding discussion of typification, symbols may be seen as the material components of the site that are related to the more abstractly defined affective states called forward in specific settings. This is how symbols - or symbolically loaded settings - enter typification.

6. Examples of Identity Supports

The following is a typified description of two public settings of the neighbourhood, both conducive to tensions sustaining the identity between Sacca Fisola and its inhabitants. These examples are sufficient to illustrate the study. For each example, a description of the setting is followed by a few excerpts from the observer's record of his own impressions. These illustrate the data used for the construction of ideal types referring to the affective relationship between the site and the user. An outline of the typification follows. As discussed above, the typification is a mixture of cultural as well as current aspects of the settings as these are related to emotions.

It should be added that the public settings that are analyzed satisfy the condition of being sites where the neighbourhood's inhabitants also have the occasion of observing each other; thus, the attribution of affective bonds is made possible.

6.1. Arcades

6.1.1. Description

In Sacca Fisola, there is an alignment of arcades at the ground level of the building block. Most of the neighbourhood's shops - six of a total of nine shops - are situated here under the only arcades of the island.

Although the arcades are rudimentary in their expression, reduced to their bare essentials as straight square columns framing rectangular openings, these answer the practical requirement of shade from the sun in summer and from rain in the winter. For shopkeepers covered space marks at the same time a protected space in front of their shop, allows them to gain some extra surface space and better attract clients.

When it is calm, the shopkeepers themselves will sit and relax next to the shop entrance under the arcades, where they can watch and follow what is going on while chatting with passers-by. From ten o'clock, shopping goes on steadily and intensively until about twelve-thirty. This activity will again take place late in the afternoon, after the siesta. Particularly before lunch the arcades are a meeting place, of exchange between women, between shopkeepers and clients as well as between mothers and children; they will use the flat surface under the arcades for roller-skating and other games. At such time, life under the arcades is intensive, contrasting with the shallow and empty square ("campo") in front of them. Thus, although the arcades are formally rigid, the customers have taken possession of them. They are functionally effective: providing an extension of the shops towards the exterior, outdoor playing areas in the shade offered by the arcades, as well as protection transforming public encounters into confidential conversations - these, among others, are examples of such effectiveness.

6.1.2. Observer's Feelings

Excerpts from the observer's notes about *his own feelings* under the arcades in the neighbourhood:

Tuesday 10:30 a.m. I stand under the arcades next to Gino's shop. I watch the women doing their shopping. There are about twelve people busy, some entering, some coming out from a shop before entering another. Although I try to remain unnoticed, I feel that I am being watched. This makes me feel uneasy while taking my notes. I have the impression I'm an intruder, I can't sympathize with the people I am watching, I have a feeling of growing estrangement. Yet being under the arcades gives me a sort of protection although it is not an intimate space. When I move out on the square I feel totally exposed. Taking notes about the shopping activities captures my mood. I am less concerned now about my relationship with others.

Friday 11:30 a.m. Waiting to be served in the shop, I listen to others speaking about neighbourhood news. We are six people - and two clerks - one is sitting, four other women waiting, two groups of two, and one is being served. One group of two - and one clerk - discuss about a family going astray. I know whom they are talking about. I feel compassion - as do the others, I believe. Outside, the shade of the arcades protects from the already warm sun. Another shopkeeper is busy arranging his produce - I exchange a few comments with him about the weather. His produce lends colour to the dim lighting under the arcades. I feel close to the others, to the community. I am relaxed and protected, somewhat less when I look at the bare square in front of the arcades. I experience a complicity with the others, we share something.

The above excerpts from the observer-psychologist's notebook illustrate opposite affective states as experienced by him, on two different occasions, in the same setting. These notes also illustrate data that have served for the typification. The following outline, while also descriptive, is focused on the typification - particularly as this relates to "*because*" motives of affective bonds between the setting and the users. The attribution of these to the inhabitants follows the previously presented procedure and a checking has been done by discussing the following account with customers and shopkeepers.

In concrete terms, this procedure has been the following:

- discussion with people under the arcades while strolling, shopping, playing or standing in the shade (four women, three shopkeepers, two men, four youngsters). Questions were: "What comes to your mind?", "What about this place?", "What about others?". The dialogue was informal and notes were taken afterwards, with particular attention to the emotional colouring of descriptions,
- proposition - on another occasion - of "my own answers to the (above) questions". Notes were taken of the auditor's reactions, and a "better formulation" was sought about the feelings involved. This amounts to a progressive search for a "common platform",
- discussion of the typification at a neighbourhood meeting,
- individual "approval" of typification from a new sample of ten people (all customers and youngsters).⁴

⁴ The "verification" procedure is admittedly too weak, but at the time of the study its relevance was not yet evident. If in this article priority is given to the researcher's own diary, it is because such data are more rarely speculated on. Yet they might strongly influence an observational study even when this is not explicitly recognized. Besides it might thus be suggested to architects that "personal impression" can also be built upon to approach emotional ties between a neighbourhood and its inhabitants.

6.1.3. *Typification*

During the community's twenty-five years of existence, the behaviour patterns have gradually taken shape. Today the inhabitants - and particularly the women who do most of the shopping - consider the arcades an extension of their personal space where the stranger is immediately noticed and commented upon. The protection offered by the arcades as well as the strict spatial demarcation that they denote serve to separate this place from the remainder of the "campo". In this manner, the arcades among the public places of the neighbourhood have specifically become carriers of memories shared by the community's women: shopping, friendships, discussions, disputes, gossip sessions, as these have occurred and developed in the course of time in the shade of the arcades. The affective dimension of such memories suggests an evaluation of their symbolic meaning.

Rudofsky (1969) has abundantly illustrated the filiation of arcades from Ancient Greek to modern times as an architectural device. An atmosphere of interplay between exterior and interior, protected and exposed, light and shadow is tied to the ambiguous connotations of arcades. The formally lavish expression of richly adorned arcades stands in sharp contrast with the simple alignment of arcades at the ground level of a building block in Sacca Fisola. Yet, these oppositions are also experienced under the arcades in Sacca Fisola: light and shadow, exposition and protection, exterior and interior can be recognized and felt in contact with this space.

Several psychological reflections grow from the data presented above and from our identity perspective.

6.1.4. *Typification: Feelings*

Psychologically, the fight is between night and day, between black and white, between the unknown unconscious and consciousness. These characteristics both clash and complete each other psychologically; they are components of the individual's struggle. The arcades become symbolically loaded by being a spatially concrete mirror of the conflict between fundamentally opposed dimensions and specifically by offering a place where they interpenetrate. This is what has happened in Sacca Fisola; by the repeated use of this space, it has become a *locus* for the feelings of many of the neighbourhood's inhabitants.

The arcades become the inhabitant's mirror, his spatialisation, that offer protection from blind impulses, but at the same time is exposed to these forces. The symbolic expression "the relatively unknown thing" deals with the desire to integrate most of what goes on outside, yet also opposing a total exposition, in order not to lose one's interiority. The identity of the inhabitant with respect to his or her neighbourhood is nourished in this conflict with reference to memories attached to the polar opposites. To be under the arcades is to take part - when one is attuned to the built environment - in the opposition of the conscious and unconscious. The arcades are a symbolic support for customers - and for women who in their life's trajectory are tied to this place - by situating themselves psychologically, by feeling where they stand in the love/hate relationship towards the neighbourhood.⁵

⁵ One might ask if considerations such as these would not be more accurately expressed by a novelist. Acclaimed novelists are - to use the terminology of Schutz that we have referred to - successful in their typifications. However, typifications might match imaginary or also concrete reality. The transition from imaginary to concrete reality is a necessary part of the sociological investigation whereas it is not so for the novelist. A further question concerns the conditions of verification that assure this transition. They can be more or less thorough.



Fig. 3 & 4 Wharf for ferries connecting Sacca Fisola to Venice. An intensive movement of people takes place daily on the wharf. Waiting for the ferry is an occasion for meeting, talking, drinking a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, for buying a newspaper, for reading it.

Fig. 3 & 4 Débarcadère pour les ferries qui assurent le transport de Sacca Fisola à Venise. On assiste journalièrement à un mouvement intense de gens sur le débarcadère. L'attente du ferry est une occasion de rencontre, de discussion, pour boire une tasse de café ou un verre de vin, pour acheter ou lire le journal.

6.2. *The Wharf*

6.2.1. *Description*

Venice is regularly connected to most of the islands of its lagoon by a transportation network of public ferries. Wharfs for embarking on the ferries are situated at strategic points on the Channels. The only wharf of Sacca Fisola has, like all others, a covered waiting room with a bench, and a ticket office on pontoons. However, next to the wharf itself, two small bars, a newspaper stall and a telephone booth as well as a mailbox have found their place. With the exception of a few shopkeepers, practically all workers leave the island every morning, starting from 6:30 a.m. Thus an intensive movement of people is observed every day on the wharf. From 9 a.m. on, women can be seen leaving to shop in Venice. Those - a minority - who do not work in the industrial plants on the mainland around Venice will return to Sacca Fisola for lunch. From 6 p.m. the movement of return from work is again important. Early in the morning and late in the afternoon the wharf is literally the focal point of the community. It is a place and an occasion for meeting, talking, drinking a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, for buying a newspaper, for reading it. Men gather outside on the square next to the newspaper stall, whereas some of the women sit down inside the waiting room. Two strategically placed bulletin boards inform of political meetings in the community. The small bar with glass walls is placed so that people while drinking their cup of coffee may observe the arrival of the ferry; the newspaper stall is so close to the access to the wharf that one is forced to have a look at the journals on display. These small buildings were set up after the wharf itself but are an integral part of the setting today, adapted as they are for the most important activity of the place, namely waiting for ferries.

6.2.2. *The Observer's Feelings*

Excerpts from the observer's notes about his own feelings of the neighbourhood:

Monday 6:30 a.m. Still tired. A rainy day, it is still dark. We are about twenty people waiting - more are coming. I feel cold, I stand under the wharf's roof. Wanting to get back to my dreams, yet having to take notes. A look at the newspaper stall - then at the newspaper of the man standing next to me. A short moment's escape along images provoked by the news. Take the ferry to get away from this odd place. Everyone seems to be in a dream world, far away, like myself. The few people discussing football under the same roof where I stand are a nuisance.

Thursday 6:30 a.m. Alert, after a good night's sleep. Standing next to a group of four, now five men. We are outside, smell of spring, noise of boats from the channel, it is going to be sunny. Feeling sympathy for the man desperately in need of a cup of coffee - who savours it and watches me. We smile at each other. The youngster whom I've seen three mornings in a row running to catch the ferry is just making it. Otherwise no anxiety. A feeling of solidarity, we are all together waiting.

As for the previous example, these excerpts from the observer's notes illustrate opposite affective states as experienced by him, on two different occasions, in the same setting. The following typification, together with its descriptive elements has been elaborated in the same way as in the case of the arcades - and has equally been discussed with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood (sample of twelve people: four men, four women, four youngsters). The procedure is identical with the one described for the arcades, except for the change in context.

6.2.3. *Typification: Context*

The diverse spots next to the wharf are occupied daily and testify that the setting is "functioning", allowing men and women of the neighbourhood occasions for fostering their identity as inhabitants of the community. Generally, the wharf marks symbolically the transition from one world to another as is manifoldly described by poets and novelists. Many embarkation points in the Venitian lagoon are richly decorated, remnants of architectural endowments. Thus on islands such as San Giorgio Maggiore or San Servolo, the wharf is situated on a small square on the outside of the walls delimitating the island's buildings. All visitors are compelled to cross a porch upon entering and then must walk across an ornamented pavement whose symbolism is intended to be explicit. Those who receive the message may in this manner adjust psychologically to the place that they are going to enter or leave. The meaning is one of reception and protection, and by the same token a hint of the opposite feelings of the unknown, of insecurity and adventure. There are no traces of pavements or porches in Sacca Fisola. It is a neighbourhood that has neither past nor present in terms of grandiose traditions. Making a sudden appearance twenty-five years ago as a subsidized working-class neighbourhood, there has been no need to receive people ceremonially, to mark their arrival by showing them respect or protection. However as the wharf "functions", it is appropriate to talk even under such circumstances about a symbolically loaded setting.

The position that one occupies next to the wharf, the posture and movements, have their significance; sometimes the same person will be next to the newspaper stall, will watch anxiously the channel, while at other times he or she will chat, or close his or her eyes and lean against the wall or sit down in the waiting room. These can be instances of an identity conflict. The wharf in Sacca Fisola provides a support for these feelings, the characteristics of the setting are thus situated and articulated. Owing to the fact that all new arrivals or departures to or from Sacca Fisola happen *via* the wharf, it is a unique neighbourhood in terms of its contacts with the rest of the world. This contributes to the symbolic loading of the setting that marks the transition from the world of the neighbourhood to the one outside it.

6.2.4. *Typification: Feelings*

The wharf is the gate that one must know in order to leave, but to which the umbilical cord is attached, a gate that is needed as long as feelings of belonging persist. One of the conflicts evoked by the setting - while waiting for the ferry, savouring a cup of coffee, looking at newspaper titles, watching the arrival of the ferry carrying people from elsewhere - is the difference between being part of a neighbourhood that is well delimited, isolated, peripheral, popular; and, on the other hand, the extension ("freedom") of the world beyond the channel separating the community from Venice. The opposition is between that which is limited and unlimited, between that which can be dominated and which cannot be dominated, between reality and aspirations. Waiting for a ferry is a short instant of a day that a conversation with acquaintances will make even shorter, yet it is a reminder for the inhabitant of being part of the neighbourhood. The wharf is the point where the voyage begins and ends, a dual as well as an ambiguous place of attraction and repulsion. There are moments when the desire to get away is strong ("I'll never come back"), others where departure is difficult. The wharf suggests, sustains and anchors materially these conflicts.

7. Discussion

The above analyses of two public settings in the neighbourhood of Sacca Fisola are merely intended to illustrate a study that provides some insight of the "quality of place" in a particular community. It is stressed that the built environment might be symbolically meaningful not only when this appears to have been its designer's explicit intention, but also in cases where the inhabitants' continuous use and taking possession of it have loaded a setting symbolically. In particular, using identity as a *typified* description, specific public places may be analyzed as fostering the ties between inhabitant and neighbourhood in terms of affective conflictual states that by alternatively *attaching* the person to or *detaching* him from his community guarantee continuity to this relationship. Precisely when this continuity becomes unsustainable - that is when the setting becomes a unipolar support for the inhabitants' identity, calling forth either a "fusion" with the community or its complete rejection - then the neighbourhood may lose its prerequisites as provider of a symbolically meaningful environment. Without conjecturing on the consequences such a distortion in the affective bonds between a person and his or her habitat might have, an extended analysis of public settings of the neighbourhood in terms similar to the ones used in the above examples, may offer insight into the feelings fostered by different localities within a neighbourhood.

The extent to which the above outlined procedure is an *essential* approach for describing emotional ties within a neighbourhood may be left as an open question. What may be affirmed is that it is one approach to feeling as it relates to the built environment. It only concerns those instants when the person is sensitive to his or her environment, but aren't these also moments that architects and planners have in their mind when working creatively?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ERIKSON, E. (1956), The Problem of Ego Identity, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 4 (1956), 56-121.
- FILSTEAD, W.J., Ed. (1970), "Qualitative Methodology: Firsthand Involvement with the Social World" (Markham, Chicago).
- FREUD, S. (1955), Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921), *Complete Works Vol. 18* (Hogarth Press, London).
- GANS, H. (1962), "The Urban Villagers" (The Free Press, New York).
- JACOBS, J. (1969), "Death and Life of Great American Cities" (Random House, New York).
- JAEGER G. & SELZNICK, P. (1964), A Normative Theory of Culture, *American Sociological Review*, 29 (1964), 653-669.
- JUNG, C.G. (1958a), Answer To Job, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11 (Princeton University Press, Princeton) (ed. orig. 1952).
- JUNG, C.G. (1958b), Psychological Types, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (Princeton University Press, Princeton) (ed. orig. 1921).
- JUNG, C.G. (1959), Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9 (Princeton University Press) (ed. orig. 1934).
- JUNKER, B.H. (1960), "Field Work" (University of Chicago Press, Chicago).
- KELLER, S. (1968), "The urban Neighbourhood: A Sociological perspective" (Random House, New York).
- LANGER, S. (1953), "Feeling and Form" (Charles Scribner, New York).
- LEVI-STRAUSS, C., Ed. (1977), "L'identité" (Grasset, Paris).

- McCALL, G. & SIMMONS, J., Eds. (1969), "Issues in Participant Observation" (Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass.).
- NOSCHIS, K. (1984), "La signification affective du quartier" (Librairie des Méridiens, Paris).
- OLIVER, P., Ed. (1975), "Shelter, Sign and Symbol" (Barrie & Jenkins, London).
- PROSHANSKY, H. (1978), The City and Self-Identity, *Environment and Behaviour*, 10,2, 147-169.
- RAPOPORT, A. (1972), Australian Aborigines and The Definition of Place, *Environmental Design Research Association 3, Proceedings, Los Angeles*, 1 (1972), 3-3-1-3-3-14.
- RUDOFISKY, B. (1969), "Streets for people" (Anchor press, Garden City, N.Y.).
- SCHUTZ, A. (1962), "Collected Papers, Vol. 1-3" (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague).
- SCHUTZ, A. (1962), Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences (1953), *Collected Papers, Vol. 1* (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague).
- SCHUTZ, A. (1980), "The Phenomenology of the Social World" (1932 - for the original German edition) (Heinemann, London).
- SEAMON, D. & MUGERAVER, R. (1985), "Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World" (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, Harvester).
- SENNET, R. (1970), "The Use of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life" (Vintage Books, New York).
- STRAUSS, A. (1961), "Images of American Life" (The Free press, New York).
- SUTTLES, A. (1972), "The Social Construction of Communities" (University of Chicago Press, Chicago).
- TUAN, Yi-Fu (1974), "Topophilia" (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.).
- WEBER, M. (1957), "The Theory of Social and Economic Organization" (The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill.).