

WORKSPACE APPROPRIATION AND ATTACHMENT

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Abstract: *This literature synthesis presents a short history of the evolution of the concepts of space appropriation and place attachment, highlighting the difficulty of their operationalisation from a cultural point of view. The next subject brought into discussion is the relation between the affective dimension of the connection between a person and the work place and the behaviours which are prone to insure the proper functioning of organizations, such as the organizational civism and the organizational commitment.*

Key words: *space appropriation, place attachment, organization civic behavior, organizational commitment.*

1. Space appropriation, a multifaceted concept

The term of space appropriation has known an unequal development depending on the age, country and culture where it was discussed, being obviously unequally used in the language of social science (Pol, 1998). If in fields such as geography, sociology and architecture the term was consecrated via a variety of meanings, in the fields of social and environmental psychology, its definition came late. At this point we have to mention that the pioneers of the latter two mentioned fields were English language speaking researchers and in English the term ‘appropriation’ has lesser meaning than in the Romance languages, in which a lot was written on topics related to geography, sociology and architecture (Pol, 2000).

The origin of appropriation is identified by Graumann (1976) in the Marxist anthropology, more precisely in the soviet anthropology at the beginning of the 20th century. Marx sustained that man reproduces himself through the objects which he designs (Bogdan & Mişcoiu, 2014); by acting upon the world and transforming it, the man updates his potential. Seen from this perspective, appropriation is done on two levels:

- Individual appropriation, through which every person, in view of his relationship to the world, transforms the surrounding objects in goods which he considers to be his own.
- Social appropriation, which, in non-democratic societies is transmitted from generation to generation, at the level of each social class.

This second level is tackled by Viġotski and later by Leontiev, who consider the intellectual development to be rather the result of a social function, historically and

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culturally marked, than the result of an individual process. Leontiev talks about the appropriation of the forms and types of social activities, of the social products, joined by the interiorization of the knowledge and practices already existent at social level. Individual appropriation is therefore strongly influenced by the interiorization of the socially and historically determined significations. This fact makes an over-time connection between Leontiev's conclusions and those of Marx, to whom material appropriation is mandatorily associated to humanization.

It may be the case that this ideological charge of the history of the appropriation concept justifies the difficulties encountered in its adaptation to the field of environmental psychology, especially when it comes to the English variant of the term. The development of environmental psychology in the last half century was done in two directions (Pol, 1996): the positivist direction of the Anglo-saxon orientation, interested on the impact that space design can have at individual level (in hospitals, psychiatric institutions, organizations) and at social level (the evolution and space planning of the architectural housing ensembles and of the individual houses, in order to transform them from a shelter house to a home). The second development direction is the one of Continental Europe, with France and Germany as key elements, which mostly highlights appropriation in various contexts.

In the 60s, the Strasbourg-based team lead by Moles brings new developments through the theoretical reframing of the appropriation concept, based both on Lewin's topological theory (1936), and on the elements of human geography and urban sociology forwarded by Lefebvre (1970). Continuing these preoccupations, the IAPC (International Architectural Psychology Conference), organized by Korosec-Serfaty in 1976 reunited researchers of both previously mentioned orientations around the topic of space appropriation, which lead to the coming-together of perspectives and to the visibility of the concept.

A few of the contributions made on that occasion are synthetized below. The contributions are centered on the definition and enrichment of the concept. Sansot (1976) sees space appropriation as a collection of practices due to which an object (a thing or a person) is influenced by the one who owns it. Chombart de Lowe (1976a), insists on the relation which is created between the user and a certain space as a result of its repetitive use, which allows the integration of that space in the existence of the user and gives him the opportunity to root it in his life, to mark it in a personal manner, to transform it according to his free will. The concept is enriched from a psycho-analytical perspective by Villela Petit (1976); appropriation is seen as a mutual projection of the person and of the space. The person projects herself in the space which she inhabits and lends her personal characteristics to that space. Because of the fact that the person projects herself in the space that she uses, part of the characteristics of the space reflects upon the person who owns it. Thus, space becomes both appropriated and the one who appropriates.

The social dimension of the appropriation process is highlighted by Barbey (1976), who states that the appropriation methods are greatly dependent on cultural models, social roles and role models. This leads towards the cognitive, affective, symbolical and esthetic processes, which are profoundly influenced by social rapports (Chombart de Lowe, 1976b). The consequence is that the objects, and their spatial placement thus come to carry messages and appropriation becomes a communication vector. Barbey suggests the antonymic term of misappropriation in order to describe the processes through which a person, either individually or as a member of a group, feels that space no longer belongs

to her or is foreign to her. In her opinion, the forces which lead to misappropriation are stronger than the ones which trigger appropriation.

Appropriation can be analyzed from two perspectives: as a transformation action and as symbolic identification. The first perspective derives from the territoriality and personal space ideals developed by Altman (1975), and the second one directs us towards an ensemble of affective, cognitive and conative processes (Vidal & Pol, 2005).

After the conference which defined the topic of appropriation from multiple perspectives, the research which dealt with the problem was numerous, specifically in Europe and Canada. Most pieces of research tackle the concept of territoriality, to which they associate the notions of landmark, frontier and personalisation: in France Moles & Rohmer (1998), Segaud, Brun, & Driant, (2002), Rioux (2004), Dias, Charles, & Lopez, (2012); in Spain Pol & Moreno (1992) and Moreno (1992), in Canada Serfaty (1999), Morval & Judge (2000), Morval & Corbière (2000).

The Anglo-Saxon scientific world tackles the same every-day reality but prefers the concepts of place attachment, place identity (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983), place dependence (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981) place meaning (Hay, 1998). It was only in the last decade of the former century that Pol (1993; 2000) designed a theoretical model to synthesize the two perspectives.

2. Place attachment – the Anglo-Saxon version of appropriation

The Anglo-saxon scientific world prefers concepts which seem more explicit and easier to operationalise from a cultural point of view, when dealing with the same daily reality. Among these concepts we mention topophilia (Tuan, 1974) place attachment, place identity (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Gustafson, 2001), place dependence (Moore & Graefe, 1994; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001), the sense of place (Hay, 1998; Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003) and space attachment (Altman & Low, 1992; Hwang, Lee, & Chen, 2003). Next to these highly general concepts, other more specific ones, associated to a given space were proposed, such as: residential satisfaction (Bonaiuto, Fornara, & Bonnes, 2003), community feeling (Mc Millan & Chavis, 1986), urban identity (Lalli, 1992) or social urban identity. All the mentioned concepts highlight the dynamic connection which is established between the person and a certain place or space.

The great variety of terms used often caused confusion in terminology and methodology, but this confusion was overcome in the mid 90's, when Bonnes and Secchiaroli (1995) defined attachment as the affective dimension of the connection between a person and a certain place. This definition integrates the theory of place attachment by Schumaker and Taylor (1983) and the contributions brought by Giuliani (1991) and Altman and Low (1992) respectively. This definition highlights, as Bowlby (1969) and later Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978) had stated, that the main characteristic of attachment is the desire to keep proximity towards the object of attachment, which is the expression of a strong affective connection between the individual and the place where he lives, which objectifies in the effort of the individual to turn this space into something as personal as possible, as much of 'his own' as possible.

Irrespective of the model and of the concepts used at theoretical level, the investigation of the impact of appropriation and attachment gives answers to questions such as the ones regarding the social dimension of public space constructions, civic responsibility, economic, social and environmental sustainability. These answers are necessary in order

to adapt the interaction modalities to the new social requirements (Vidal & Pol, 2005).

The management of risk situations has for the first time brought forward the issue of resilience inside an organisation and this issue has afterwards become relevant for the performance factor. Hollnagel, Journé and Laroche (2009, p. 227) state that 'resilience does not appear instantaneously, that it is neither an organisational reflex nor the result of an order dictated by one's superiors, but that it needs only a certain amount of time to crystallise'. The crises which result from the turbulence inside the organisational environment are susceptible to consolidate organisational resilience, via two complementary processes: one based on positive learning, which helps diminish the shock and the other one based on double-shift learning, which includes strategic changes that favour the diminishing of vulnerability inside the organisation (Altintas & Royer, 2009).

Pavalache-Ilie and Rioux (2014) investigated the relation between the employees' capacity to get over the difficulties encountered inside the organization (resilience) and the attachment towards the workplace; the workplace was a university, the participants were teachers and office employees. The hypothesis of the association between workplace attachment and resilience is sustained by data, mostly when it comes to adaptability and ease in finding proactive solutions, particularly in the case of the subsample consisting of administration employees. The connection is weaker for the teachers, compared to office employees, whose workplace is more diffuse and less localised (amphitheatres, seminar rooms, a shared office). Due to the career advancement, they often obtain a personal space inside the faculty, sometimes an individual office, which seems to consolidate their feeling of belonging and consequently amplify their resilience, particularly the dimension of the capacity to identify proactive solutions.

3. Workplace attachment and positive organizational behaviours

There is a complex relation between workplace attachment and positive organizational behavior like organizational civism and organizational commitment. The ethical behaviour at work holds a privileged position in the preoccupations of organizations, the civic organizational behaviour being intensely valued and investigated. Originating in the extra-role behaviour described by Katz and Kahn (1966), organisational civism gravitates around the idea of collaboration (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). This behaviour cannot be prescribed or solicited before some events take place.

Ever since the 80's, Organ (1988) described the syndrome of the devoted soldier as the behaviour with no direct relevance towards the task prescribed in the job description, but as a result of a personal choice with positive organizational effect. Borman and Motowilko (1993) make a distinction between the activities which directly and indirectly contribute to reaching the expected parameters of productivity, describing two forms of performance: the task performance is attained by actions through which the individual directly contributes to the effectiveness of the organization, while the contextual performance indirectly supports the energy and the present and future organizational climate.

During the half century since it was introduced, the syntagm 'organizational civic behaviour' has been tackled from two perspectives. The first is constituted by Graham's model (1991) which connects a) obedience, respect towards norms and organizational

procedures b) the loyalty towards the organization, which determines the employee to put the interests of the organization above his own and c) voluntary participation in organizational events. All these components are not part of the professional role prescription and are not executed in order to obtain rewards, but in order to facilitate the functioning of the social aggregate (Podsakoff & MacKensie, 1997).

The second perspective continues the path of the research initiated by Organ and synthesizes the results of the studies conducted by Diefendorff, et al. (2002) and Lievens and Anseel (2004) respectively. From this perspective, the concept is multidimensional, fact which generated controversy regarding the number of dimensions.

For more decades, numerous researchers focused on the influence of the attitudes of employees on the organisational civic behaviour. Among the most discussed psycho-organisational variables we mention work satisfaction (Paillé, 2008; Yoon & Suh, 2003), work involvement (Cohen, 2006; Paillé, 2010), organisational justice (Colquitt, 2001), managerial ethics (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994) and transformational leadership (Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999).

Defined as a psychical state determined by the connection between the employee and his organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991), the organisational commitment arises the attention of researchers, due to the fact that the three identified components are differently associated with the decision of staying inside the organisation. The employees who declare a high level of affective commitment stay inside the organisation because they feel well; they want to be part of the organisational team. If the commitment is a calculated one, the reason for staying inside the organisation is connected to the fear of losing already gained economic or social benefits. The ones who demonstrate strong normative commitment stay inside the organisation because they feel that they owe the organisation for benefits already obtained, being strongly loyal to the organisation.

The workplace attachment and the organizational commitment have proven to be strong predictors of the organizational citizenship behavior (Rioux & Pavalache-Ilie, 2013), a good reason for managers to stimulate the development of work space appropriation.

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