

URBAN SPACE REPRESENTATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM BAHIA BLANCA (ARGENTINA). MIND MAP ANALYSIS

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The lived space is designed as a subjective space that depends on each individual, with its personal and social characteristics. Spatiality also influences its structure as well as its history being part of the society. Exploring spatiality can be done through a series of methodologies: mind maps, generic translations of people's being and feeling.

The city, as a dynamic location formed by several and different components (tangible and intangible) that structure the urban pattern plus the inhabitants and the relations of power among different local actors, define a sort of identity. Under this context, the investigation shows the study of Bahía Blanca, a mid size city located in the southern west of Buenos Aires province (Argentina).

The objective of this research is to analyze the mental representation of primary school students from Bahía Blanca through mind maps as a methodological tool. Related to this, we present as a hypothesis that the experienced space of children from the city, is structured from social spaces related to entertainment and leisure activities, rather than from those associated to culture and history of the place.

In order to achieve our goal, we worked with kids from primary school aged between 6 and 11 years old. Field work done during the second term of 2014 was structured from the premises of a non-probabilistic or directed sampling having as its basis Primary Formal Education. Under this context, we identified and selected a public school and two private schools for each delegation, the three of them from the centre of the city since most of these schools are located in that area. The selection of the different institutions was based on the willingness of the Directors of the schools to apply for our interviews. The total number of analyzed schools was 8.

As regards the means to get the data, the methodological procedure was established from Lynch's (1959 [2008]) contributions with the application of mind maps. These mind maps are built from the mental representation generated unintentionally under the basis of each person's individual characteristics, perceptions interpretations and experience of reality.

A mind map is the translated image of the subjective individual space, is the image created from the symbolic value given to that space. Even though this methodological tool is a useful tool to get into the subjective space of the individual, it has been criticized during the investigation.

Recreational spaces are means to socialize and entertain the community. As regards children, these spaces are essential urban elements in the process of growth and social values interchange.

On the other hand, the spaces with heritage value work as cultural identity boosters in an urban changing context which is influenced by contemporary precepts. These precepts are the remaining of communitarian history, which have to be preserved as a symbol of the local past and future

By this study, we can infer that the experienced space by children from Bahia Blanca is structured from the socializing spaces related to leisure and entertainment, instead of from those associated to history and culture. From this we can imagine that contemporary sites based on recreation, marketing and consumption prevail against those associated to the local cultural heritage. This claim is supported by the weight both categories acquire in combination.

To add to this investigation, apart from the obtained results which are useful to decide on public local decisions, it is necessary to establish certain propositional guidelines in relation to the cultural heritage which will in turn contribute to highlight the existing attributes or characteristics in these components and, at the same time, place the subjective spaces of inhabitants in general, and of the primary school students in particular, this translated later in protection and preserving actions:

- First, it is of mayor importance to incorporate to the school curriculum, content based on history and culture of Bahia Blanca, associated to heritage consciousness in order to contribute to giving more value to Bahia Blanca's social heritage.
- From the public side, we should say it is essential to enlarge and regulate a curriculum which will enable students from kindergarten, primary and secondary school to visit and get to know public tourist leisure attractions.
- In favor of making inhabitants more conscious we should incorporate more educational games and fun activities in open green spaces, all of them related to interpreting the cultural and natural heritage. These interactive tools will in turn contribute to make inhabitants more conscious. Some parks and squares like Plaza Rivadabia and Parque de Mayo are heritage venues, apart from being representational spaces of fun, relax and entertainment.
- On the other hand we should contribute to improve and incorporate signage displays on different spaces of the urban heritage. By doing this we communicate the value of cultural resources and help to get to know them better and eventually take care of them more. Information Technology and Communication are a proper scenery for

implementing this initiative because they enable the use of several tools (augmented reality, virtual reality, etc) which are attractive for the users, specially for kids and teenagers.

- As regards leisure time, by developing open air shows we could favor the realization of children's activities to help them learn about geographical local spaces.
- Within the university sector, boosting courses and seminars for teacher's professional development would favor the teachers training on topics related to culture in the city. University extension programs can be complementary pillars of these initiatives.

The established guidelines work as initial proposals, which from the educational sector and from the government should be considered as fundamental basis in the management field and in the heritage spaces preservation. Each one of them has to be based on an exhaustive project which describes the initiatives proposed in detail. In this sense, it is necessary to plan from the corresponding planning sectors and also the implication of the local society by active participation that determines and considers social aims and interests of the community. Children, as main recipients, have to be part of the managing process with procedures which go in hand with the age of the group in question. The methodology of mind maps can thus be useful, articulated with other tools which will enable the development of initiatives based on the perception of the user and not on the mere vertical strategies imposed by the specific government bodies.

