Reading Housing with Proximity in Lefkoşa through Oikodomos Learning Activities

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Abstract

Proximity is regarded as a concept to decode the residential environment depending on the distances in their configurations in different levels and scales. The set of distances in home environments reflects users’ interaction both as psychological and sociological terms. This helps us to understand the construction of the home space and inherited behaviours from that place, climate and culture. The layers of private and public intersections can be interpreted with these findings. Multiple distances establish depth and density between territories of residential entities gives us clues for the social network in housing. This paper is aimed to apply this conceptual framework into selected residential areas in Lefkoşa to mapping proximities and exhibit housing typologies. This study has initiated as a part of the learning activities in our master programme, which are led by the Research Project Oikodomos; the Virtual Campus to Promote the Study of Dwelling in Contemporary Europe.

Keywords: Proximity, Housing, Oikodomos Learning Activities, Space Layout, Lefkosa.

Introduction

Primarily, proximity refers us to a set of distances where interpersonal relations can be evaluated in the built environments. In fact, proximity is a complex and interpretive term has covered multiple theoretical frameworks in which can be speculated in different fields of practice in design professions as well as social sciences and humanities. In this paper, an attempt specifically to be made in applying of this concept into configuration of architectural layouts in and around of residential quarters in relation to the housing clusters, neighbourhood, district and urban environments.

Simultaneously, the concept of proximity has been studied in the research project ‘Oikodomos: A Virtual Campus to Promote the Study of Dwelling in the Contemporary Europe’ as the core theme has been set for 2010-2011 academic year educational activities in Oikodomos partner schools, which located in different European settings. Following with the same line, as part of learning activities of this collaborative syllabus have been responded in the Faculty of Architecture in Eastern Mediterranean University as a new partner schools among others from Spain, Belgium, France and Slovakia (www.oikodomos.org). Therefore, Informal Studies on Housing II Master Course conducted by the author and her colleagues in EMU to research on this theme through the platform Oikodomos.
The aim is to utilize proximity concept as a means of reading the environment, and practising its theoretical framework into selected residential areas, which have been significant effects in the timeline of the city of Lefkoşa; and mapping proximities in the different scales (from the unit to the urban patterns) and levels (physical, social, etc.). Therefore, recording proximities in Cypriot housing environment and reviewed the findings in terms of proximity to resulted remarkable outcomes for further studies on housing issues.

**Defining Proximity**

In the Oikodomos platform, the interactive studies over a distance learning process, which started by constructing theoretical knowledge on the definition and understanding with tasks conducted in each partner school, which are fragmented with different aspects over the project website. First task is to define proximity and explore the relationship with housing.

In LA2; this learning activity proximity has been explored with its all dimensions: the meaning of proximity in different theories of Architecture and Humanities has to be re-visited.

**Understanding proximity**

The set of distances between multiple parties interact to each other in the built environment as people and as their homes. These components create a complex mechanism in housing configurations and layouts in multiple layers consisting of physical, psychological, social and cultural levels. There are a number of aspects can be evaluated in this conceptual framework in different scales as well; from the unit scale to housing groups and to the neighborhood and to urban/suburban areas.

Proximity can be perceived in a housing unit with its interconnectedness with the others in several ways. On one hand, a social mapping can be readable through the household members’ perception, behavior and lifestyles. This may decode the relationship in certain family structure and its neighbors and how this character links and configure in certain environments and in cultures. On the other, the territories around home conveys a holistic understanding and interpretation with the concept of proximity; through recording the public, private and in-between zones in and around home environments, and the neighborhood can be evaluated terms of interfaces, which reflects as boundaries and thresholds in different housing typologies and neighborhood patterns and various urban and suburban densities.

**Theoretical rationale**

Proximity recalls different theories and concept in relation to architectural theoretical fields mostly in the humanities; psychology, sociology, philosophy, urban design and planning theories.

As the most relevant field psychology, proximity had implicitly considered within different concepts such as personal space, privacy and territoriality in public, private and in-between domains as seen in the framework of man and environment studies, environment-behaviour research; and discussions by a number of authors directly linked the proximities of these concerns (Sommer, 1969) (Altman, 1975) (Gifford, 2007). In that instance, perceptive proximities provides a well established link how these relevant distances can be considered in regards to the Gestalt theory (Gibson, 1950). For security needs of individuals as one of the primary necessities, defensible space idea launched in mostly mass housing solutions against to the vernacular settings, where direct correlation had found in between the density of demanding habitants in a close proximity to each other (Newman, 1972).
In communication studies, proximities explored with their dynamic relationship with location and time, which corresponds with three main weak points. Diverse conceptualization of space creates a linkage in proximity studies such as ‘living patterns with residence’, and ‘interpersonal linkages with communities’, ‘informal’ or ‘personal space’. First of all, it is reported that the study of proximity has been operationalized in terms of physical distance creates misconception of the term against to its other peculiarities such as psychological and communicational and so on. Actually, location should consider with the types of boundaries influence in the proximity definitions. For instance, a wall between rooms creates total separation of users may leave similar distances as some other correlations and possibilities depend on the barriers, however discontinuity in-between the zones. The second shortcoming; the movement of people in the space through time should be handled due to proximity revealing a temporal set of non-fixed distances in any situation. The third predicament is the distance between pairs of individuals in many social settings which should apply to multiple actors establishing different proximities through each other (Kirste and Monge, 1974).

In architectural theory, the organizational and hierarchical levels in space organization of housing layouts and its micro and macro level environments can be analyzed by some different reading models. Seeing that, the proposed model consists of physical systems as ‘infill, furniture, building, tissue and urban structure’ related to a territorial units as from ‘room, dwelling, neighbourhood up to the town’ (Habranken, 2002); this supplies new theoretical openings to configuration of the ‘ordinary’, which explicitly speculate the set of distances and idea of depth configurations on housing itself (Habranken, 1998). Sociology of place is another headline to combine the social practices with proximity as interaction within the neighbourhood community. Rewieving sociological base theories through a historical change, space as a term should be seen as social character until the end of the 19th century. Later, the conception of space started to changed with an interpretation ‘from the body to the neighbourhood’ and turned its direction to discover ‘what makes space as place’ in the 20th century. Within this perspective, geometric and metaphorical space were differentiated by Simmel. Interestingly, ‘Bogardus’s social distance scale’ developed with the concept of social distance in 1933. Afterwards, this idea implemented to an updated scale by Dodd and Nehnevaja in 1954 according to their accommodation zones. This scale was based on the multiplication of a ten-meter unit, which gives the character of dwelling and explain the social relationship with the other parties within these spheres (Ethington, 1977). These idea attained the similarity with the proxemics theory, in which the proxemic distances defined and combine with the behavioural spheres relates within the cultural basis in intersection area of architecture and anthropology (Hall, 1966). Moreover, ‘a social distance pyramid’ interpreted by Westie and Westie after a research on the sociometric distances between different races and economical classes in 1950s. This research has demonstrated remarkable findings that ‘belonging in an upper class matters more than a part of a race, even the colour of the skin’ as a result (Ethington, 1977).

In the context of modern architectural discourse, ‘genius loci’ explored the spirit of the place and proximities in the place in a phenomenological context (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). The distinctiveness of the place can be recorded by the proximities of interpersonal relations depend on different geographical locations. ‘Places bring together in bodily co-presence’. However, contracting ‘locus of diversity, tolerance, integration, cosmopolitanism, sociation’ to the places of isolation, individualism, anonymity, loneliness, egoism, segregation and fear in urban places can not establish a community for that place. A place effect can be represent geography, built form, demographic patterns in a planned pedestrian friendly street with unplanned interactions (Gieryn, 2000), which could be readdressed more detailed connotations in terms of proximity.

Besides, search continues in more positivist space organization theories as such ‘social logic of space’ and ‘space syntax theory’ emphasized interrelation on a synthesis of multiple scales of spaces (Hillier and Hanson, 1987). This experiment relies on axial configurations and relevant distances in cities, which applied to housing territories, it may correspond to proximities of those formations, which may accept as the new and more scientific accordance as in ‘the pattern language’ (Alexander et al, 1974).
Contemporary urban theorists preach about territories and distances in different terms. Some is favour of the densification of facilities and promotion of the public uses and residential zones of concentration in ‘the compact city’ idea, whereas others are favour of using different statement on the genius loci applied in a problem of placelessness.

To Sola-Morales (2006) the urban space can be seen as “a system of relative distances” between housing groups, single houses, facilities of neighbourhoods and other functional division of cities according to sets of rules in diverse levels and actors. Sets of distances in between different elements of the residential environment ‘penetrate the domain of the dwelling itself: distances from the street to the front door, from the entrance door to the living room, the distance between the kitchen, as the heart of the dwelling, and the bedrooms, being the more intimate territories within the domestic space’.

Dwellings could be seen as configurations of distances, where physical distances obtain additional meaning: bigger or smaller distances can mean higher or lower possibility of contact, of sharing space. In other words, proximity also refers to a social dimension: sets of distances define the level of collective use within a project, from the scale of the domicile, to the scale of the neighbourhood. Distance can become social distance. In recent years, social distance is increasingly understood as a buffer, a safety measure: distance has become a device to guarantee separation and segregation. In this context, the following question arises: have territorial mechanisms which prioritize individual identity replaced mechanisms based on collective strategies to share space (Kris Sheerlinck, 2011)

Learning Activities in Oikodomos Platform

In this section, discussions on the theory and conceptual comprehension as a whole studied under the title of series of LA21 Learning Activity as ‘Understanding proximity’, ‘What is Proximity’, What is the relationship of proximity and housing?’ were the students’ tasks. These assignments were studied and added the Oikodomos Virtual Campus Workspaces by each Partner Schools as well as discussed in the university campuses separately. The interpretation of the concept in different courses and studios gave a good possibility to discover more on the subject and make it possible to perceive the different characteristics and qualities of the given work in different perspectives. These assignments in first learning activity for the concept of proximity can be visited in the Website as well as from students in the Faculty of Architecture of EMU (www.oikodomos.org/workspaces) (Figure 1-5).
Exploring Proximities: Housing & Urban Context

Reading territories may decode the relationship in family structure and its neighbours and influence the character of residential environments. Distances between hierarchical zones around home convey reflection of the concept of proximity. Public-in-private and private-in-public in housing can be evaluated in terms of interfaces. This reflects the configuration of boundaries and thresholds in housing layouts and neighbourhood modes in urban / suburban context. Mapping proximities in the unit scale to the urban one and physical, social and psychological level has discussed. Therefore, recording different proximities in different housing typologies in specific housing quarters creates an understanding and interpretation of the overall urban features.

In view of that, EMU Architecture Department with the graduate course mentioned above, the proximity concept has been studied by reviewing literature with theoretical grounds. A number of housing quarters which have significant legacy for Lefkoşa's housing identities, were selected due to their diverse urban patterns, which represents various inputs to the daily life of the city as their neighbourhood’s features. Criteria has been set for the Oikodomos learning practices, density should be low-rise and exhibits the quality of the peripheral distinctions. On the contrary, these neighbourhoods located in urban areas depending on having overall low density resolutions approximating 3-4 storeys in the city. EMU Students begin to work in this interesting atmosphere to launched analysis build on the abstraction of real distances and conceptual discoveries of proximities into an achieved some points in relation to tasks given as seen below.

In the LA22 Oikodomos Learning Activity has started by all partner schools in the line of ‘Exploring Proximities in the Housing & Urban Context” studied. Different models of proximity used to understand, analyze and detect the character of the chosen sites for each school by a journey of proximity concept digging and data mining in order to propose some coherent interventions and discuss various strategies to be compared to each other. The initial task was TK14 Interfaces I: Analysis of local houses. This analysis was dealt with in building scale for the selected houses by referring to the concept of proximity. In the analysis, a number of houses are selected from each quarter to be employed to understand spatial and social patterns, interfaces and relationships within and their immediate environments. The houses are to be separately studied within the limits of building scale which also explores relationships with close surrounding (neighbouring building, street,
public space, etc.) as well as internal private domestic issues. Each student group worked in different quarters and prepared documentations on proximities of the assigned houses with specific format containing text, plans, sections, schemes by the given time period to be uploaded to the Oikodomos Workspaces. Keywords were social distance, physical distance, visible / invisible distances, spatial and social patterns in the building scale. Learning outcomes was defined as awareness on the ability to utilize the concept of proximity for understanding spatial and social patterns in housing. Following Task is TK15 Interfaces II: Housing groups in Lefkoşa. Case studies in neighbourhood scale were the task dealing with analysis of the housing groups in which the initial house is taken place. The plot and building relationships, density configuration, and closeness to public settings, types of vehicular and pedestrian approach, and levels of social and physical interactions were to be studied by referring to the concept of proximity. Keywords were social distance, physical distance, visible/invisible distances, spatial and social interactions, neighbourhood scale. Learning outcomes was required to ability to understand different levels and types of interactions amongst housing blocks by means of the concept of proximity.

**Methodology of Exploration:**

A matrix study consisting two main axes, which are three scales and five different levels has been proposed by the tutors of EMU for the Arch 570: Informal Studies of Housing. The tables of matrices used for the exploration of the proximities in each different housing environment. The Levels are defined as ‘Modes’, ‘Territories’, ‘Layers’, ‘Boundaries-Thresholds-Interfaces’, ‘Senses-Experiences’ with various concepts within the theoretical framework. The scales are more realistically found in housing projects establish the second axis for the matrix as the ‘City’, the ‘Neighbourhood’ and the chosen ‘House’ as a building scale. The aim of this method is to speculate the proximity concept in different points of view, and connect known concepts and theories accordingly to the problem found at these specific quarters. Thus, the matrix presented to the students in an open-ended structure seen below developed by Dr. Uraz from EMU.

The ‘Scales’ of investigation corresponds with the ‘Levels’:

1. **CITY:** Urban texture (planned, unplanned)
   a. Modes: Characteristics of urban texture: Centre, Periphery; Urban /Suburban; Central District / Sprawl, Land Use Policy, Urban Greenery
   b. Territories: Zoning Of Land-Uses, Transportation
   c. Layers: Standards Of Zoning, Social Control And Segregation
   d. Boundaries-Thresholds-Interfaces: Capacity, Density, Spatial Control and Edges
   e. Senses/experiences: Cognitive, Mental Maps, Image-ability

2. **NEIGHBOURHOOD:** Housing layout (mass design, custom design)
   a. Modes: Neighbourhood Centre, Standards, Social Services, Different Housing Layouts, Relations
   b. Territories: Transformation: Private in public / Public in private
   c. Layers: Attachment, Social Network, Accessibility, Adaptability
   d. Boundaries-Thresholds-Interfaces: Permeability, Suitability, Sense of Place
   e. Senses, Experiences: Reach-ability

3. **House:** Typologies Of Single Units
   a. Modes: Cluster : (Detached, Semi-Detached), Closure: Courtyard (Extroverted, Introverted), Continuity: (Terrace Houses)
   b. Territories: Hierarchy: Public / In-Between/Private, Depth, Dept Configuration
   c. Layers: Functional (Function , Based/outdoor life), Social (Status, Ownership, Neighbourliness), Psychological / Territorial Privacy Definitions (Seeing Self, Seeing Others, Being Seen, Defensive)
   a. Boundaries-Thresholds-Interfaces: Utilitarian (choice), Protective (Territory, Definition), Semantic (Control)
   b. Senses-Experiences: Hearing, Seeing, Usability
Selected Housing Patterns in Lefkoşa

Eight different quarters of residential developments have been selected and four of them were studied in spring term, which were Yenişehir Houses (1930s), Standard Houses (1940s), Efruz Houses (1970), State Social Housing (1985), all in the Northern Lefkoşa in the capital city of Cyprus.

Whereas the first student group has focused on social housing, one municipal housing solution in 1940s in the colonial period and an example of a state social housing development built in 1980s; the second student group worked on private housing solutions referring to a planned urban neighbourhood in the colonial period 1930s and a private housing development 1970s. This approach is aimed to compare the solutions of different housing configurations according to the manner of diverse actors of housing in crucial periods in the capital city of the island (Figure: 6-7).

Figure: 6-7: Municipal Social Housing - left; State Social Housing - right; Selected Works from the Learning Activities: LA22- Exploring Proximity and Tasks: TK14: Interfaces I and TK15: Interfaces II by EMU ARCH 570 Master Class Students: Gr.1: Iranmanesh, Drbabandsari, Khayyat Kahouei, Davarpanah (www.oikodomos.org/workspaces: retrieved 8th June 2011).

1. Proximities visited and problems defined in the State Housing Development

The first student group worked on state housing solutions in different periods within new urban initiatives in the colonial period with Standard Houses in 1946 and Governmental Social Housing implemented by Turkish Cypriot administration starting from in the years of 1985-1995.

a. Standard Houses

It was designed in 1946 by the Public Works Department in the British administration period, at the suburbs north-east of Lefkoşa for government employees and workers and a subsidized housing scheme at Omorphita –now is Küçük Kaymaklı - by William Caruana, the architect of PWD (Schaar, et al 1995). Typology of the houses is typical terrace housing added semi-open spaces for the climatic response to provide shading. The size and its compact form makes them to call standard housing emphasises the ‘social notion’ within. The European identity of the British Empire attempted to reflect to a modernist lifestyle supported with new functionalities at the home solutions supports with the new materials and technologies for the period (Ozay, 2004). Following this argument, it can be pointed out that these houses were implemented as one of the first planned neighbourhoods, which consist of a primary school and its sport facilities and a small central square with two shops and a coffee house as referring the local tradition as well as fitting the urban design principles to create social cohesion with the social needs.
b. State Social Houses

After the highly conflicting years started in the island, each ethically separated state section founded social or emergency housing solutions after 1974 to bring a recipe to lack of housing. Government sponsored social housing in northern Cyprus initiated in major towns starting form the capital city Lefkoşa with the Social Housing Act launched in 1978. There were different phases with two typologies.

Between 1984 -1999, housing units as row houses, blocks of flats and detached houses were designed for the middle-income groups minimum 60 and maximum 120 square meters at the lowest costs. In Phase I, (1984-86) started as in duplex solution first in Lefkoşa (Gazioglu, 1996).

Two storey row houses placed adjacent to each other by common walls along pedestrian paths that run at different angels to local roads and parking lots. Each house has a short frontage and a long depth, and share the wall along their long side. Houses have a small garden and car parking at the front and a private garden at the back. They are two storey houses typical solution with living room, kitchen and WC at the ground floor and three small bedrooms and a bathroom at the first floor. Apartment types containing more than one dwelling unit and usually four storeys, car parks at the back and shops in front at ground floor level (Türsoy, 2006).

General Evaluation

Generally, the typology of row houses exhibit lots of problems. Acoustic and privacy problems occur due to having shared thin walls between buildings. The distances between buildings is according to municipal arrangements, which is minimum three meters may affect user’s privacy in a different way. Neglecting of a courtyard typology, which is harmonious to the traditional Cypriot housing pattern, which gives opportunity of ventilation and leaving enough distances in between the neighbouring families. Semi-open shading areas are required for the climate especially in the hot periods. This may provide a quality of public interface to a neighbourhood street, which is also important to create proximities between families who may communicate and create a sense of place. Most of the State Social Housing lacks forming the necessary public spaces, community centres and shared areas, although some added shop solutions at the ground level may refer some of the users’ needs. This issue is very important for social cohesion.

![Figure 8: Additions shows necessities (by Davarpanah, S.)](image)

![Figure 9: Proximities visited in public housing by the first group of students](image)
2. **Proximities visited and problems defined in the Private Housing development**

The second student group worked on two private housing developments; one refers to Yenişehir Private, which is a planned urban neighbourhood in the colonial period 1930 onwards and Efruz Private Houses designed by the first registered Turkish Cypriot architect Ahmed Bahaeddin in 1970s.

![Yenişehir Private Housing - left; Efruz Private Housing - right](image)

**Figure:** 10-11. Yenişehir Private Housing - left; Efruz Private Housing - right; Selected Works from the Learning Activities: LA22- Exploring Proximity and Tasks; TK14: Interfaces I and TK15: Interfaces II by EMU- ARCH 570 Master Class Students: Gr.2: Ghafari Tavasoli, Salimi Khatibi, Tekbiyik, Arfaei (www.oikodomos.org/workspaces: retrieved 8th June 2011).

**a. Yenişehir Houses**

Yenişehir, a typical old suburban quarter was a planned as a new neighbourhood just outside of the old city walls in the capital city with a diagonal pattern with a small square in the central focusing point in terms of urban design layout, implemented in between 1930-1945 in the British administration period (wikipedia.org). These houses were restorated when Turkish Cypriots Republic settled after the separation. The existing residents are at the moment elderly, usually retired with average income. In the first glimpse it is easily understandable that the district is quiet solitude, it can be the effect of the residents’ aging. Transportation even in the rush hour is very limited in this area and in the midday the district is almost empty. Yenisehir area brings some doubts about the qualification of housing satisfaction based on social interactions of the average age and also social cohesion between the residents and the other citizens from different parts of the city. Although distances are not much in between the houses, the social communications and cohesion are limited and not harmonious with it.

**b. Efruz Houses**

Efruz private housing development were applied by well known Turkish Cypriot architect Ahmed Vural Bahaeddin (1927-1993), whose highly articulated designs is finely detailed and expresses the nature of the structural form and materials specified depend on the modernist architecture period, at Kumsal Quarter in Lefkoşa in 1970s, which also known as Müdüroğlu Houses. Efruz Houses are belonging to rich income households. The houses are designed in a way that they are locked to each other like pieces of a puzzle.
General Evaluation

According to present situation of Yenişehir Housing, the proximity between houses shows a kind of dis-connectivity in-between houses and from other parts of the city. Due to being one of the first suburban developments, less dense environment implemented. Adopting of these houses to the contemporary lifestyle is needed. However, the inhabitants generally are from the low-medium income, not able to look after and make necessary articulated outdoor spaces and refurbishments in their houses. At the same time, lost spaces spread all over the district points out unsuccessful social interaction in the vicinity of the area. Still, there might be a chance of attractiveness can be created for the residents to spend some time in the proximities around their houses in proper design common areas and communicate with others who visit these points. Connectivity is also important between the district and other parts of the city. Considering residents’ satisfaction provides a healthy environment, designers and planners should pay attention to proximity with better qualified living conditions for residents. Proximities studied can be a tool for establishing intermittent areas to connect families and different age groups for social cohesion, which is one of the inadequate issues in this neighbourhood.

The positive point of the matched formed of houses in the site plan layout in Efruz quarter facilitates good interactions for its inhabitants. Variation of the open spaces around homes including the linear balconies and front yards are interchangeably used during days or nights creates a sense of community by this visual connection. Taking the advantages of creating appropriate proximities in intersection spaces in this case, the residents have possibility to connect with other families, luckily in the same rich class, and feel a sense of belongingness to that community and stronger social interactions. Despite this, the area has a lack of having close proximity to some collective spaces with various facilities for each ages, and a lack of close proximity to public transportation.

Designing Proximities:

Architectural Strategies and Implementing Proximities in the Social Context

In the Oikodamos Platform, various learning activities practiced in designing architectural and micro-urban interventions, which is defined in a way how people, activities or buildings relate physically, visually and socially on the architectural implications of proximity in the partner institutions.

In LA24: ‘Architectural Strategies’ seeks proposals demonstrating coherence with micro-urban strategies as how to empower selected suburban areas to adapt to recent social, economic and environmental challenges, respecting as much the current composition of inhabitants. Architectural practices integrate with urban infill strategies or densification processes in suburban regions in search for more sustainable use of space. The main goal is to present “architectural sequences” illustrates the impact and efficiency of the further developed housing and urban interventions responding to the problems and potentials for the selected areas, prove coherence with the proposed model of proximity. In LA27: ‘Implementing Proximities in the Social Context’ is aimed to establish a participatory process on the context of the chosen housing to enable students collecting information through communicate with the neighbours to search for solutions to the socially conflictive problems with housing in this area. Other two tasks were successfully achieved in Istanbul Workshop was ‘Signs of Proximity; and ‘Mapping Proximity’ in Göksu Quarter. First task was to apply the concept of proximity to the site in a short timeframe through a photographic reportage of the visited site. This task developed to help to introduce and read the site, as well as to construct an immediate forum of discussion between the mixed groups of participants. Second task was designed to understand and disentangle the present mechanisms of growth and use of the selected site and propose some possible transformation by adding housing program. Using the concept of proximity, all participants read and map the site and its direct environment and propose a sustainable housing project.

(http://arc.housing.salle.url.edu/oikodemos/workspaces/index.php/activities/indexwork/type:list)
Discussing and Experimenting Proximities

A critical reflection of all Learning Activities exhibited interesting outcomes and provided a coherent reading of the contemporary housing landscape. After analysing of proximity as concept and data from in various site analysis and theoretical feedback by lectures, the studies interpreted in each quarter separately by students in Lefkoşa. Proximity is related to social dimensions, inherent to the built environment and its organization: from the domestic scale till the scale of the neighbourhood, social concerns should be studied and discussed after workshop by considering this experiment as a pilot study for its original destination; the site and its potentials. The outcomes of former tasks accelerated with a critical observation of the chosen areas in Lefkoşa in North Cyprus.

In LA25 - TK16 Proximity: ‘Extracting Themes’ was the common reflection exercise in Istanbul Workshop and presented with Mixed Groups formed by Partner Schools’ Students and external participants. The main goal of this common task is to reflect on the results of the preparatory Learning Activities related to the Proximity Workspace, done at each institution during this last semester. This activity served as an introduction to the Workshop Activities in Istanbul. Many related tasks were defined and fulfilled at the different institutions in a theoretical or a conceptual level related to different sites with its potentials, problems and/or a specific housing program. During the following discussion or evaluation sessions, some sub-themes seemed to appear, sustaining an interesting discussion among students and professors.

During the introductory session (Istanbul, Monday May 2), 10 groups of participants presented the outcomes of their previous tasks, “filtered” by the theme that is assigned to each group. For instance, group 1 will review the outcomes of the uploaded presentations of all previous tasks, by focusing on the theme of “distances and connectivity”. This means that this group will check all presentations and present a summary or a critical reflection about that theme, based on design proposals in Brussels, referring to conceptual references as presented by students in North Cyprus, taking into account comments made by students of Bratislava etc. This cross-institutional set-up proved the coherence in the integrated Learning Activities and provided an interesting starting point for the planned workshop activities. The themes are ‘Distances and Connectivity’, ‘Collective Spaces’, ‘Discontinuity and Barriers’, ‘Social Cohesion’, ‘Housing Clusters’, ‘Sets of Relative Distances’, ‘Accessibility and Permeability’, ‘Domestic and Urban Sequences’, ‘Transitions’, ‘Intermittent Spaces’.

Finalizing Term Reports on the Selected Sub-Themes of Proximity

All these studies on site at our Faculty and the Oikodomos online learning website addition to the study in a foreign environment in Istanbul workshop, our students achieved to propose an architectural intervention and micro-urban strategies with a coherent conceptual description and elaborated theoretical framework in their master studies. Final reports presented on 7th June 2011 by EMU students on how to implement this knowledge in the selected housing neighbourhood in Lefkoşa as follows.

In Standard Houses

‘Accessibility and Permeability’ studied as one of the sub-themes in two term papers by Kahouei and Darbandsari. Kahouei address ‘Proxemics’ theory of Edward Hall to define the set of distances in housing environment relying on the users ‘spatial behaviour and the way of life in the Cypriot settlements. She investigated how proxemic distances affect the social interaction indoor and outdoor layouts of ‘Standard Houses’ in terms of accessible and permeable formation of those spaces through the connection to the road, the neighbourhood and to the city itself as a whole. The social and spatial patterns analysed to find out the rules of regulation of semi-open spaces in this quarter. Darbandsari focused on more psychological understanding of accessibility and permeability on the users’
satisfaction. The physical ability to access the places affect people’s perception of the territory, and a way to create a sense of space and belongingness.

Mainly outdoor barriers are consisting of flowers and vegetations in different density and heights create highly permeable spaces between the houses. People lives in the area made some additional spaces observed in the neighbourhood. This gives certain degree of permeability and personalization of the gardens. Car-disability is very common attitude, and walking activity is a scare in this climate. Because of this factor, accessibility to the other places is not available by the public transport, and encouragement of the pedestrian activity is not supported due to the lack of pavements. Additionally, lack of collective spaces for social gathering is very tangible. Public space has a significant potential which gives a platform of communication where people carry out activities that bind a community, whether in normal routines of the daily life or in time to time festivities. Therefore, a sustainable neighbourhood in terms of proximity regulation under the theme of accessibility and permeability remains as the question of the research. Both proposals constructed on the issue of creating a ‘Streetscape’ as an accessible public space with its designed pavements with sitting niches to improve the quarter in terms of ability of establish easy accesses and permeable boundaries for the Standard Houses in this projects.

In Social Houses

‘Discontinuity and Barriers’ sub-themes have been studied in connection to the concept of proximity by Iranmanesh. Taking the investigation of the experience of the space, which points out that the distances between ‘different types of points or elements’ through measuring mathematically, psychologically or scientifically (Genocchio, 1995) Placing barriers in order to make territories cause discontinuity to be protected; to establish privacy rules to regulate relationship between the self and the others; and control the domain in an hierarchical way. These barriers of establishing discontinuity are classified as visible, invisible and semi-visible characters formed by Gestalt principles. While visible ones simply are any architectural elements; semi-visible elements can be like arteries, road, lighting, smell, sound, wind, and air. Invisible spaces are offered as mental territories, sense, cognitive maps, and memories as such. The gap created by barriers can be observed by physical formation of the housing as in hierarchical way and by research with interviews on their thought -mental map- of people to decode the social network of that housing environment. In this study, measuring perception of the social ‘Discontinuity and Barriers’ investigated by asking “the inhabitants where they feel at home” in the social housing at the chosen area in Lefkoşa. Especially discontinuity between semi-public area and public area not defined well enough to provide good social relations between neighbours. The lives are mainly more ‘family-bounded’ character only for indoor spaces. The proposal is to integrate user participation process to make more sociable places in pedestrian pathways and the green park as lost spaces to be redesigned with the findings of the interview made. ‘Domestic and Urban Sequences’, ‘Transitions’, ‘Intermittent Spaces’ can also be connected in this study to create certain hierarchical definitions.

Yenişehir Houses

‘Distances and Connectivity’ has been examined by Arfaei in this old suburban quarter. The proposal to create to pedestrian roads to connect in more healthy allocation of recreational urban green and make activity spaces as cycling and walking by car controlling accesses. Another sub-theme ‘Social Cohesion’ investigated within their perceptual measurements of Proximity by Tavasoli. Yenişehir quarter has some weaknesses which can be promoted and some valuable features that can be improved and be more organized through the proximity factor in connection to social cohesion. Satisfaction of inhabitants has been correlated with neighbourhood factors such as safety, quality of housing, presence of social networks, tenant involvement, age, self-efficiency, and financial stress.
(Bruin & Cook, 1997; Varady & Preiser, 1998). Healthy residents with coherent pattern of proximity between members of a society prepare suitable conditions in certain time line in determined places.

Tavasoli explored the Gestalt theory, which defines incentive factors leading figural unity. Among them ‘proximity’ is the factor which can be addressed as the most affective indicator of designing housing layouts and neighbourhood planning and design; depend on culture, social habits of residents. To Edward Hall (1966), three categories of space involve with human interaction. One of them is ‘Informal space’ focusing individual to outwards and it shifts with the mobility of that individual. Other ‘Fixed-feature space’ is configured by concrete elements and ‘Semi-fixed-feature space’ by fluid objects. Set of distances in from the first to the third type makes boundaries become more flexible and changeable. The range of boundaries define proximity in various aspects for housing and urban area where the residents lives should obtain suitable living conditions in this neighbourhood which refer to social cohesion with relative distances in terms of improvement to make the atmosphere more pleasant for urban life and make the housing layouts more reasonable to settle in. These two proposals can be integrated for more comprehensive solution in terms proximity and sustainable housing quarters.

_Efruz Houses_

There were two final term reports submitted in the sub-terms ‘Collective Spaces’, ‘Housing Cluster’ and ‘Privacy’ by Khatibi and ‘Accessibility and Permeability’ by Tekbiyik in Efruz Houses. ‘Accessibility and Permeability’ studied by Tekbiyik, proposed a connection of streets an urban frameworks with ending an open bazaar in the quarter to create more vital traditional environment, whereas ‘Collective Spaces’, Housing Cluster’ and ‘Privacy’ studied by Khatibi in connection with physical and psychological proximities. The emphasis was tuned that the proximity affects people’s behavior and life style through sets of relative distances in the category of psychological or physical issues. The households and local morphology of housing is vital to decode the social structure of an area. Find an answer to the weaknesses of the quarter based collective spaces, as a common space for local people to suggest a general proposal to improve it. Human scale and ability to of the calculation proximities bring a debate on the transportation time between functions and the contact of two points. Walking time scale appears as best fit for measurement of distances except longer distances needs of vehicle transportation. The measurement of the distances is perceptual and depends on the vehicle that is used. These perception differs depend on the boundaries and feature of the elements of proximity, time to time not are not physically or psychologically crossable by the human nature. Even locations of the entrance at the front of dwellings and level differences or stairs may change the feeling of proximity. ‘Equal distances may not need equal travel time’ (Monge and Kirste, 1980).

The proposal is a comprehensive statement, which covers respect to the individual privacy as well as the need of interactive spaces for communal activities in order improves this housing cluster and connects with its neighbours and the city in terms of sustainability. Providing a station for public transportation to reach the Efruz cluster and filtered through roads towards a green public space. Appropriate arrangement of physical and psychological proximities reflects user satisfaction in housing; otherwise migration to another living area would be a response of dissatisfaction shown by the users in that left environment (Morris, Crull and Winter, 1976).

**Conclusive Remarks**

After involving very comprehensive concept as proximity, there were lots of quest remained to deeply investigate. Due to a broader reflection of this concept, new horizons have opened to re-visit the past theories and framing multifaceted problems on housing research area. Proximity should be used as a tool to read houses, housing groups, neighbourhoods, urban and suburban areas at different levels to connect with the physical, social, psychological, perceptual models to make use of the existing knowledge with a new perspective to suggest more meaning human habitat and settlements.
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