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Conference	A Panel on Inter and Transdisciplinary Relationships in Architecture, 3-6 July 2017, Athens, Greece
Title of Paper	<i>Towards a definition of 'place'. Cross-disciplinary methodology for interpolating architectural and sociological data in Claremont Court, Edinburgh.</i>
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Keywords	Architecture, Sociology, Cross-disciplinary research, Qualitative research, Visual research methods, Non-verbal communication, Contextual mapping.
Abstract	<p>This paper introduces our novel cross-disciplinary methodology developed under the research project 'Place and Belonging: what can we learn from Claremont Court Housing Scheme?'. This original methodology integrates research methods from architecture and sociology in order to investigate the relationship between place and sense of belonging to a community, using the case study of Claremont Court, a post-war housing scheme in Edinburgh. The research's theoretical framework defines 'place' as the physical space together with the spatial atmosphere, or phenomena that give meaning to it (Norberg-Schulz 1996, Gieryn 2000). Through individual and collective spatial practices, people attach meanings to a place that they can then claim belonging to (Benson & Jackson 2013). Thus, the meaning and (co-)production of place become critical in the presentation of the self (Cooper 2004), and in establishing belonging to a collective identity. Consequently, our methodology is underpinned by the theory of non-verbal communication, according to which people generate the meaning of a place through '<i>personalisation</i>' (Rapoport 1982:21) of their environment.</p> <p>Drawing on these premises, we developed a qualitative research design which combines architectural research methods (laser-tape survey, photo-survey, contextual mapping and visual narratives); with research methods from the social sciences (biographical, walk-along and photo-elicitation interviews). Through visual (or non-verbal) methods, we study physical cues from which we infer inductively the meaning of place. Through interview (or verbal) methods we study verbal behaviour, which further uncovers the meaning of the place through thematic analysis. From the synthesis of both analyses we elicit the meaning of place for the dweller. The variety of research strategies, from architecture and the social sciences, that we have applied to the Claremont Court case-study, responds to the understanding of place as a physical and socio-cultural reality. Therefore, the research design is structured upon the idea of considering visual methods as cross-disciplinary means, which are able to integrate the physical and socio-cultural aspects of the research problem, enabling the dialogue between different disciplinary areas.</p> <p>The findings of this work are two-fold. First, as part of our original methodology, this paper introduces 'contextual mapping' as a novel research method for visualising and interpreting the data collected in relation to the lived spaces and their phenomena. 'Mapping' is here intended as suggested by Deleuze and Guattari (1980: 13) in opposition to the action of 'tracing': "<i>the map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself ... it fosters connection between fields</i>". We assume here that architecture can be an interpretative tool for the situations of daily life: thus, it follows that drawing is "<i>a way of re-presenting those situations, [...] of communicating a plot, of revealing a situation</i>" (Troiani et al., 2014: 6). Secondly, this paper questions commonly used methodologies to study environmental meaning that rely on linear models (such as those studying semiotics or symbols); we suggest instead that visual methodologies can support the synthesis of physical and socio-cultural data in a cyclic model that brings together research approaches coming from two different, yet interconnected, fields of knowledge such as architecture and the social sciences.</p>