Northumbria Research Link

Foreword
Transdisciplinary Thinking for Conceptualising Borders and Boundaries

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The chapters included in this section invite reflections and pave the road for discussing various notions of borders and boundaries as they manifest in architecture, urbanism, and the overall built environment of contemporary societies. In essence, they address key issues present themselves as manifestations of borders and boundaries as debated in the five chapters. They range from separation and conflict to formal and informal built environments and from continuity and fragmentation to evolution and transformations. The complexity of the issues raised in the chapters requires framing through transdisciplinary frameworks that aim to cross the boundaries of disciplines while blurring the physical and conceptual borders of these issues. Such a framing can be captured through two frameworks (Salama, 2019). The first deals with the conception and production of space and the second aims to understand housing patterns, typologies and choices from the perspective of contemporary lifestyles.

The Conception and Production of Space

Henri Lefebvre's argument on cities and space production was seen as ground-breaking theory: he postulates that in order to better understand the dynamics of cities their space production should be viewed more holistically, beyond the particular contexts and constraints of a specific time period (Merrifield, 2006; Shields, 1999). By focusing on abstract theories and models as well as new empirical methods to comprehend cities, the claim of the theory is that space actually a product that has been created through its own individual spatial practice (Lefebvre, 1991, 2003). The oft-quoted triad of "conceived, perceived and lived space" (Fig. 1), also known as the first ontological transformation of space, is important to refer to in this context.

Lefebvre defined "*conceived space*" as the space, which is conceptually created, in the form of representations, by scientists, planners, architects, and other experts. These representations are abstract as they are rooted in the principles, beliefs and visions held by such practitioners, decision makers and others who are in a position

to impose their personal notion of "*order*" on the concrete world, and so create a practical impact on space within social norms and political practices. Conceived space is thus based on expert knowledge in combination with ideology, with various experts identifying space through their own understanding of how it is planned and how it can influence and be influenced in future. Whether or not the thoughts and beliefs of these experts about space are actually valid and true remains an unanswered question, but what is more pertinent is that from a subjective viewpoint, these conceptions of space are usually held to be true by those who apply them in their work, hence they are in actuality "*representations*" of space. Due to the central role of governance and decision-making in this process, conceived space is the dominant factor producing space in contemporary societies.
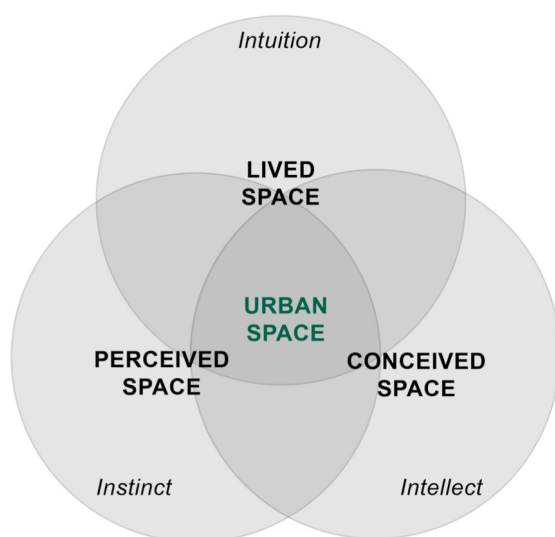
Fig. 1. The Lefebvrian conception of space (Salama & Wiedmann, 2013)

The second is the "*perceived space*" understood as the space of "*spatial practice*" where movement and interaction within various segments of society take place, the space where networks develop and materialise. This space includes both daily routines on an individual level and urban realities such as the networks that link places designated for work, leisure and "*private*" life. Lefebvre maintains that the specific spatial practice of a society can only be assessed empirically by analysing and studying the structure of its networks. Because spatial practice is empirically measurable, it is also referred to as the readable or visible space that can be seen, described and analysed on many levels and scales such as the specific sectors of architecture, city planning and urbanism, as well as the general organisation of life and the urban reality inhabited and experienced by people.

The third space, "*lived space*" can be comprehended as the direct unconscious, non-verbal relationship of humans to space; also known as "representational space", it is directly lived through associated images and symbols. The lived space is essentially subjective – a passive experience wherein the outer physical space echoes with the inner imagination, and makes symbolic use of outer objects, either retaining or rejecting them according to an arbitrary and subjective system of priorities and preferences. Specific locations within given vicinity can, for example, become focal points because of their position and status within the representational space of the particular community of people who use that vicinity, for instance, a religious building, a graveyard, or a square. Products of representational space are often symbolic works such as art, poetry and aesthetic trends.

Beyond the three "*spaces*", the production of social space as a whole has a direct impact on the environment and in cases of multicultural and diverse cities it materialises into the built reality. The "*conceived, perceived and lived space*" triad can be directly utilised within the process of understanding spatial developments and the associated borders and boundaries. The three "*spaces*" and the relationships that ensue between them are significantly relevant to the development of a holistic analytical framework for examining space production in cities, particularly in the context of the investigation of urban qualities. Undoubtedly, this is not as an abstract model reduced to comparative studies of ideologies relevant to the three "*spaces*" but a comprehensive framework that enables the development of comprehensive knowledge within the rapid transformations of urban, social, and economic environments and the borders and boundaries that stem from them.

Lifestyles and Housing Patterns and Choices

In recent years, lifestyle research has played an increasingly important role in understanding housing patterns and consequently urban development dynamics. This is based on the notion that lifestyles lead to certain housing choices; therefore, new housing developments can be studied as a reflection of these new lifestyles. Rightly, contemporary literature emphasises that housing is more than the pure need for shelter. The home environment can be seen as both a form of self-expression and an important spatial factor defining human perceptions (Marcus, 1997). Where and how a human was raised will always affect future choices and his or her acceptance of certain residential quality. Additionally, the age, income level and household size often impact the preference of certain housing types. To study the relationship between housing and lifestyles, basic needs must first be identified (Freeman, 1998). While the need for shelter can be seen as the lowest level of needs based on the simple premise of human survival, the social needs to establish a sense of belonging are followed by the individual needs of self-expression (Newmark & Thompson, 1977). In principle, lifestyle theories are based on a complex framework that acknowledges the reality of human beings driven by dynamic interactive factors rather than static personal and situational factors (Salama, 2006, 2011; Salama, Wiedmann, & Ibrahim, 2017).

The French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu introduced the concept of habitus as the result of both the hexis (a more or less stable disposition of knowledge or character) and more complex mental and subjective schemes of perception (Bourdieu, 1987; Benedikter, 2012). Habitus refers to past experiences resulting in different skills, personalities and habits, which lead to certain socio-behavioural practices. According to Bourdieu, each social class shares a certain general habitus due to similar environments, backgrounds and thus experiences. This habitus has a direct impact on each individual leading to dynamics between given constructs, which have developed over generations, and new individual perceptions introducing certain restructuring processes. The habitus can thus be identified as a holistic approach towards understanding the origin of lifestyles and the result of a long-term historic evolution, which is continuously changing. Bourdieu maintains that individuals need their habitus to find new solutions based on their intuition, which in his view is directly linked to societal norms. The resulting lifestyles have significant impact on how social structures and spatial development patterns evolve because they influence the ideas that define a good society.

The British anthropologist Mary Douglas introduced the "*group and grid*" model in her book "*Natural Symbols*" (Douglas, 1970). A group implies a general boundary around a community, which is based on choice, and a grid includes the outer forces and regulations. Douglas distinguishes between four main group-grid types: the "*isolate*", the "*positional*", the "*individualist*", and the "enclave". While the "*isolate*" only includes social groups that have been isolated by the system, such as prisoners, and therefore hardly has any impact on developments, the "*individualist*" is primarily concerned with private benefits and is therefore a product of an increasingly commercial society. Therefore, social status and its expression can play an important role in housing dynamics. The "*positional*" is rooted in a distinct group following a clear grid-given structure and thus often supports tradition and order (Douglas, 2006). Finally, the "*enclave*" includes all groups that refuse to participate in any given framework and follow their own structures. These four fundamental types offer an enhanced understanding of key lifestyle dynamics. The diversity of lifestyles is thus highly dependent on the general social structure.

In addition to the holistic approach of understanding lifestyles as the result of the habitus as defined by Bourdieu and following the clear positions within Douglas's "*group and grid*" model, other scholars have introduced pragmatic models on how to distinguish certain life modes that shape lifestyle trends today. Thomas Hojrup introduced three pragmatic life modes: self-employed life mode, wage earner life mode, and career-oriented life mode (Hojrup, 2003). The preceding classification shows that house needs, and preferences usually vary based on the income level, work sector, and work style of an individual (Salama, 2011; Graham & Sabater, 2015). While life modes can be distinguished according to the varying ways in which people work, other factors such as the demographic increase and decrease of families and the associated life modes have been researched by scholars to investigate the dynamics of housing markets.

Coupled with how people work and their family status, the role of leisure- and consumption-oriented life modes can be identified as the third determining factor for housing choice. While some social groups are significantly restricted in their spending, others consciously choose to save their earnings or at least a portion of them. Other groups alternatively opt for a predominantly if not solely consumer-driven lifestyle, as analysed and described by Thorsten Veblen in the late 19th century (Veblen, 2009; Walters, 2006). Nevertheless, among the three types of social groups, work and family status as well as consumption patterns determine housing preferences within the constraints of supply and demand and as part of urban development processes.
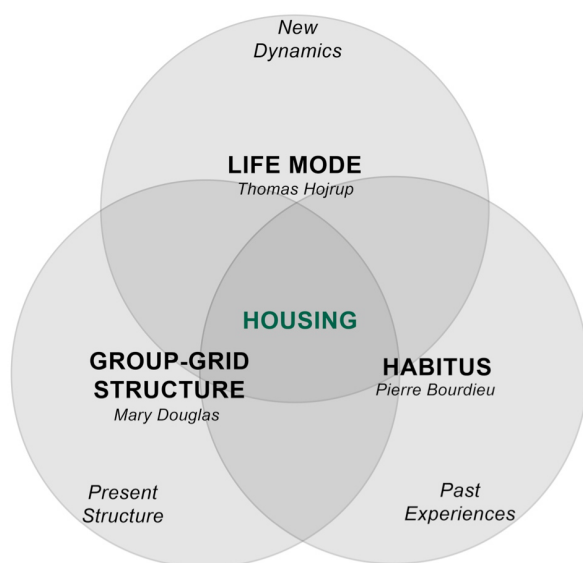

Fig. 2. The triadic perspective of lifestyles theories for understanding housing developments, typologies, and choices (Salama, 2019)

The preceding theories as they relate to housing preferences and choices, establish a framework, which posits that lifestyles are important drivers for housing developments and transformations, while the existing housing conditions have a reciprocal impact on lifestyles. Lifestyles are a product of individual and collective processes within societies and, therefore, their characteristics are highly complex. Thus, the framework can be developed to integrate the various parameters that shape the lifestyles of different social groups (Fig. 2). According to Bourdieu's theory, society is the product of a historic process and the organisation of a society is directly linked to past experiences. This is manifested in the individual's habitus, which is rooted in cultural customs as well as basic survival needs and the social

status. This abstract conception of the foundation of lifestyles in addition to the understanding of the present group-grid structure of a society provides an overview of basic social groups and their roles. The abstract conception of how societies are structured needs to be incorporated into an understanding of predominant life modes as drivers of new restructuring processes. These life modes can be defined by being family-related, or work-based, or leisure-oriented.

Beyond the Frameworks – Transdisciplinary Knowledge Production

The two frameworks discussed in this foreword present various characteristics for conceiving borders and boundaries from two angles: the conception and production of space and housing patterns, typologies and choices as they related to lifestyles. Both frameworks aim to cross the boundaries of various issues at a physical level as well as at a disciplinary level and thus reflecting in trans-disciplinarity is necessary.

Trans-disciplinarity can be explained as a new form of learning through action involving co-operation among different parts of society, professionals, and academia in order to meet complex challenges of society. Trans-disciplinary research starts from tangible, real-world problems. Solutions are devised in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including academics and professionals from different disciplinary backgrounds (Pohl & Hirsch Hadorn, 2008). Thus, Trans-disciplinarity is about blurring then transcending the boundaries of the various disciplines. As a mode of knowledge production, it can concurrently encounter complexity while challenging fragmentation of knowledge. Its hybrid nature and non-linearity easily enables it to transcend and indeed incorporate any academic disciplinary structure (Dunnin-Woyseth & Nielsen, 2004; Lawrence & Depres, 2004; Doucet & Janssens, 2011).

The first trans-disciplinary framework can enable a type of knowledge about urban research that aims at the public sector and its urban planning authorities. It can offer insights into how certain economic developments determine and reconfigure urban structures as well as how the existing urban environment is playing an important role in establishing or inhibiting conceptual and physical borders and boundaries. Similarly, the trans-disciplinary framework for examining housing development, provision, choices, and preferences demonstrates that emerging multicultural societies are rooted in extensive international migration and are particularly important cases whereby new housing dynamics and lifestyle trends can be observed.

Trans-disciplinary thinking is evident in the first agenda that captures three types of spaces that enables an integrationist approach to city research "conceived-perceived-lived," each of which requires specific disciplinary expertise. Likewise, trans-disciplinary thinking is the crux of the second framework that establishes parameters for trans-disciplinary knowledge on housing and typological transformations. This is reflected through the utilisation of three lifestyle theories

stemming from three different disciplines: sociology, anthropology and ethnography.

The various chapters of this sections address issues of separation within Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the porosity of borders in formal and informal urban and housing patterns in the content of Istanbul, the definition of the borders of urban enclaves, or the evolutionary nature of borders in Galata and Edirne. Within these contexts and areas of focus and the two transdisciplinary frameworks presented, two sets of imperatives emerge with respect of urban space and housing patterns and choices. The first set maintains that urban space is a product of conscious decision making within the public sector (conceived space), a product of the collective spatial practice of all users (perceived space), and a product of accumulated subjective attachment and identification (lived space). Th second set contends that housing perception is a result of past experience and current needs and wants, and housing preference is a result of attitudes towards integration (or isolation) from the wider community and changing needs and spatial preferences. I invite the reader to explore the chapters presented in this section of the book while relating to the frameworks presented here. It is evident that the plurality and diversity of the issues discussed in various contexts require comprehensive frameworks that materialise the growing interest in transdisciplinary thinking and action.

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