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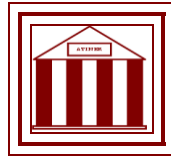# ATINER

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Designing of Information Grounds in a College Town as a Medium for Facilitating Communication and Social Interaction

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Designing of Information Grounds in a College Town as a Medium for Facilitating Communication and Social Interaction

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Abstract

This paper is to propose the design of information grounds in terms of place-related information grounds in college towns to enhance social interaction through communication.

In this particular study, a college town is chosen because of the increasing number of information grounds in college towns and effectiveness of social interaction in education. Social interaction is the primary activity at information grounds; therefore, this paper is focused on creating place-related information grounds for enhancing communication and social interaction with interiors based on human emotions and behaviors toward physical settings.

The theoretical framework is constructed based on four major areas (social factors of third place, place attachment, place-related information ground factors and M-R model). Specifically, social and physical factors for place-related information grounds, which include non-purposive and simultaneous focal activity, conviviality, comfort levels, location and permanence, privacy and ambient noise, and relations between physical factors and M-R model, will be mainly analyzed and utilized for the framework.

Through this study, the importance of place-related information grounds is presented. Also, it is beneficial to contribute to education by fulfilling the needs of information grounds in a college town. The theoretical framework may be adapted for designing of information grounds in a college town as well as other settings in the design field. Thus, the rationale of making an informational ground for communication and social interaction is a significant aspect of design and the influences in interior space are addressed. The framework may also be used to simulate new insight and investigate multidimensional research.
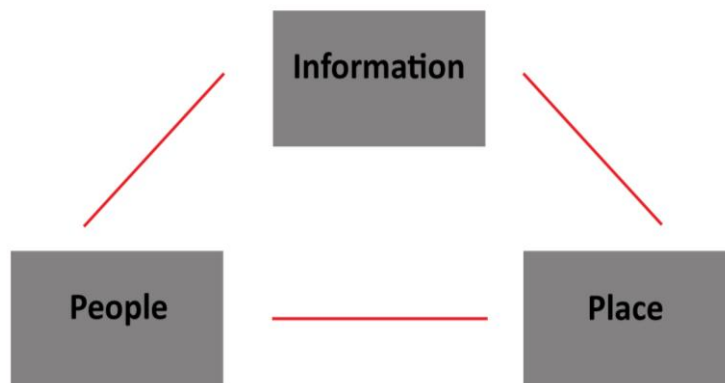
Keywords: Information grounds, Social interaction, Theoretical framework.

Background

Information exchanges happen continuously among people in their daily and prosaic environments. These environments are referred to as information grounds. Consequently, information grounds are composed of three components; information, people and place. Figure 1 explains the relationship of three components based on the work of Fisher et al. (2007). Most information grounds are created for sharing of information. However it can also be formed naturally when social interaction is actively taking place. With this point of view, Pettigrew (1999) defined that information grounds are created when a social atmosphere formed by active communication fosters spontaneous information exchange.

In the modern society, the Internet allows for easy creation of information grounds. However, the importance of knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place is minimized. Besides, Fisher et al. (2007) mentioned that place related factors of information grounds are the most significant for the effectiveness of information exchanges, and Jill (2006) also addressed that the physical space for social interaction could help others' understanding through communication for the sharing of information. Thus, how place-related information grounds will be designed and which factors of interior aspects will be applied should be considered.

Figure 1. *Three Components of Forming Information Grounds*

Source: Fisher et al. 2007.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to propose the design of information grounds in college towns for facilitating communication and social interaction among students.

In this particular study, a college town was chosen because of the increasing number of information grounds in a college town. Besides, students suggested that an information ground plays an intrinsic role in facilitating

communication with people. This social interaction is critical in enhancing one's understanding of the area and facilitating the generation of approaches that are feasible and unique in education (Jill 2007).

This study constructs a theoretical framework, which is a design guideline; how to create place-related information grounds for enhancing communication and social interaction with interiors based on human emotions and behaviors toward physical settings so that not only can designers and students efficiently create it, but they can also suggest new insights in research fields to scholars in interior design research.

Literature Review

Literature review contains an introduction to the third place addressing social factors in physical settings because social interaction is the primary action in an information ground. Moreover, it focuses on the environment-perception relationship to physical social surroundings.

Four major parts will be addressed for construction of the theoretical framework: first, social factors of third place; second, place attachment focusing on social and physical surroundings; third, the Mehrabian-Russell model focusing on human perception of social surroundings; fourth, physical factors of place-related information grounds.

Social Factors of Third Place

The third place is defined by the terms used in the concept of anchors of community through social interaction to refer to social surroundings separated from the two usual social environments of the home and the work place.

Oldenburg (1999) establishes three social environments, which he calls the first, second and third place. The first place is where one is born, grows up, and lives and the second place is where one works and spends most of one's time daily. Then, the third place is the center of one's community life that facilitates more creative and active social interaction. Figure 2 shows that social factors of the third place are quite similar to the needs of information grounds for enhancing social interaction.

Thus, one could be defined that information grounds as one of the third places in terms of physical settings enhancing social interaction with a group of people; community.

Figure 2. *Similarity Between Social Factors of Third Places and Information Grounds' Needs*

|	**Social factors of third places**	**Information grounds' needs**
Main activity	Conversation	Social interaction
Accessibility	Easy access	Walk able distances
Types of People	Regulars	College students

Source: Author's estimations.

Place Attachment

In order to create information grounds for social interaction as one of the third places, consideration of human factors is necessary. Human emotion, cognition, and relationships between human behaviors and a strong connection between places are all involved.

Place attachment is a strong and special bonding to a particular place in terms of human emotion and cognition. Since people have their own unique experiences that connect them to places emotionally, they are able to understand the concept and importance of place attachment without much difficulty. Nonetheless, it is not easy to define place attachment because of the various viewpoints constructed by each individual's thoughts and experiences.

Figure 3 explains the three-dimensional framework of place attachment defined by Scannell and Gifford (2010) based on various definitions of place attachment in the literature. The tripartite model of place attachment (Scannell and Gifford 2010) proposed that place attachment is a multi-dimensional concept of person, physiological process, and place dimensions. The first element is the person who is attached; the second element is the psychological process composed of affect, cognition and behavior and how these components are related to place attachment. The third element is the place in terms of the characteristics of place itself.

Figure 3. *The Tripartite Model of Place Attachment*
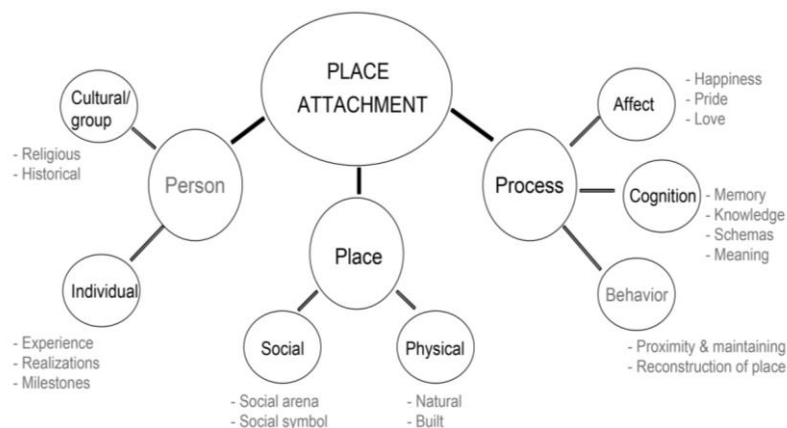
Source: Scannell and Gifford 2010.

Among the three elements of place attachment, this study focused on place related factors as a combined physical-social place attachment, because place itself is the most important dimension of place attachment in terms of creating third places.

Physical Factors of Information Grounds

Based on the trichotomy of information grounds, place-related factors are addressed: focal activities, conviviality creature comforts, location, privacy and ambient noise (Fisher et al. 2007).

Focal Activities

College students go to an information ground for diverse purposes such as eating, working out or attending class. Even though they do not intended to exchange information with each other, diverse activities encourage college students to get together and to create a social atmosphere through communication. Also, multi-activities such as eating, obtaining services, shopping, research, and working out can occur simultaneously, which may be conducive to sharing of information.

Conviviality

A convivial atmosphere, which creates a great quality of joyful, lively, and friendly moods, fosters social interaction in an information ground. Other factors such as good company and food and drink consumption also enhance socialization.

Creature Comforts

For the sharing of information, environmental factors such as furniture arrangement, lighting, music, and pleasant views or arts create a comfortable and relaxing ambiance and help to foster a social atmosphere. This is a crucial factor in the general ambiance in information grounds.

Location

The location of an information ground is important in terms of easy access. The closer people are to their home, the more sense of comfort and familiarity they have to the place, and the longer they stay and approach others in information grounds.

The Level of Privacy

The level of privacy affects people's preference in information grounds in terms of sharing information. Private zones promote personal conversation more than semi-private or public zones. On the other hands, semi-private or public zones may also be attractive because people are able to hear information shared between others. Therefore, providing various zones from private to public helps to enrich information grounds.

Ambient Noise

The level of noise in an information ground affects communication between people. In loud places such as bars or restaurants, echoing may interrupt conversations for information exchange. Conversely, appropriate background noise such as music makes people feel comfortable and relaxed enough to create an environment for information exchange.

Mehrabian-Russell Model: Approach-Avoidance Behavior

Human behaviors towards physical settings are viewed as the overall process by which individuals attempt to attain and maintain preferred levels of involvement with others and with their environment. Approach and avoidance forces are present in every interpersonal encounter.

The Mehrabian-Russell model explains immediate emotional states by using environmental stimuli and influences on human behaviors. According to this model, three basic combinations of emotional dimensions -pleasure, arousal, and dominance- are mediators of human behavior (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). In other words, human feelings can be explained by the three dimensions, and human behavior can be predicted by the Mehrabian-Russell Model. Two of the three dimensions, pleasure and dominance, will mainly be used for this study because these are positive mechanisms for approach behavior (Figure 4).

Figure 4. *Mehrabian-Russell Model*
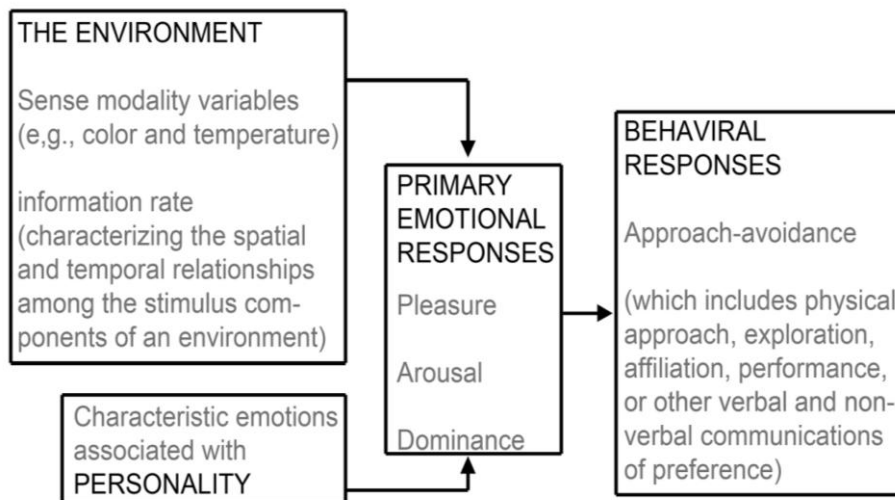
*Source*: Mehrabian and Russell 1974.

Method

This model, the adaptive theoretical framework, has been developed based on four major areas (social factors of third place, place attachment, place-related information ground factors and M-R model) that were reviewed.

In particular, social and physical factors for place-related information grounds will be mainly analyzed and utilized for designing information grounds. The central idea of this model is inducing approach behavior, such as liking, positive motivation for meeting others, desire to stay, and time spent with people induced by indoor ambiance. It is more related to perceived emotional dimensions, like pleasure and dominance, than to cognitive responses.

The proposed adaptive theoretical framework explains the effects of environmental stimuli on emotional responses affecting approach behavior for enhancing social interaction and detailed factors composing of social and physical factors to promote the positive emotional dimension of pleasure. The organization of this framework is composed of two parts for inducing approach behavior and ambiance of interiors (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Proposed Theoretical Framework
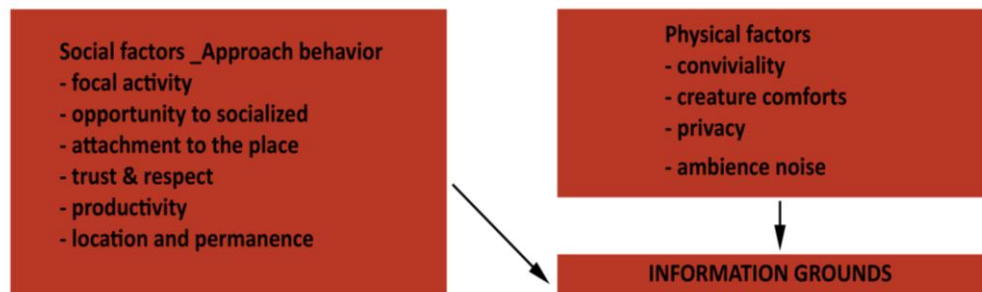
Source: Author's estimations.

Implication

Through this study, the importance of place-related information grounds is presented. Also, it is beneficial to contribute to education by fulfilling the needs of information grounds in a college town.

The theoretical framework could be adapted for designing of information grounds in a college town as well as other settings in the design field. Thus, the rationale of making an informational ground for communication and social interaction is a significant aspect of design and the influences in interior space are addressed.

The framework may also be used to simulate new insight and investigate interdisciplinary approach between environmental psychology and design-related fields.

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