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### References

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- Cody, C. (1982), An Evaluation of a New Day Centre in Henry Street, Cork, Republic of Ireland, M.Sc. Thesis, University of Surrey.
- Hillier, B., Musgrove, J.L. and O'Sullivan, P. (1972), "Knowledge and Design", in Mitchell, W.J. (ed), EDRA2, University of California, Los Angeles, 29-3-1 to 29-3-14.
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### The Place Brief: Using the Psychology of Place In Building Design

Rosalyn Moran,  
Irish Foundation for Human Development,  
Health Care & Psychosomatic Unit,  
Garden Hill,  
P.O. Box 41A,  
1, James's Street,  
Dublin 8.  
Ireland.

### Introduction

The paper demonstrates the use of Canter's (1977) theory of place as a framework for specifying the psychological dimension of the brief or program. A small charitable organisation which ran a Day Centre for unattached young girls who are psychologically at risk were dissatisfied with their existing accommodation and had decided to commission a new building. One problem of making a useful contribution to the design process was conceived of as solving three main inter-related problems.

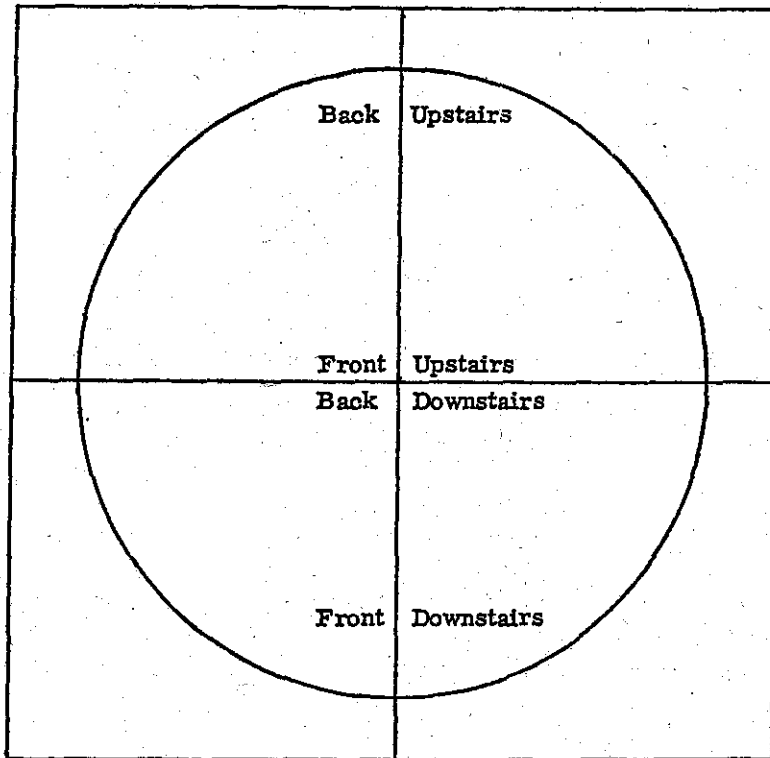
1. Firstly, it was necessary to have a comprehensive account of the design process which would provide guidelines regarding
  - the kind of psychological input which an architect would find useful
  - the form this input should take
  - the stage of the design process which is most likely to be of use.
2. Secondly, a theory which would deal with the person - environment relationship was necessary.
3. The third problem was the development of a methodology which would tap users needs.

These three problems were resolved. Hillier, Musgrove and O'Sullivan's (1972) account of the design process knit well to Canter's (1977) theory of place and Canter's theory in turn provides methodological guidelines. Hillier claims that design proceeds by conjecture - analysis rather than analysis synthesis, and argues that "if research is to make an impact on design it must influence designers at the conjectural stages." This conceptualisation of the design process demands psychological input which is most appropriate at the briefing stage. Canter's (1977) theory of place defines place as "units of experience within which activities and physical form are amalgamated". The three facets of place Activities, Physical Attributes and Conceptions.

### Methods and Results

A number of methods were developed to study the conceptual systems of the principal user groups of the Day Centre - girls, staff, visitors.

Firstly a modified Time Budget Technique, Michelson and Reed (1975) was used to outline the activities which the new building was to accommodate. Next the future users played a design game based on these activities (Peled, 1976).



The game consisted of a board on which a circle of 25 cms. radius is drawn surrounded by an outside zone of 5 cms. Players are asked to imagine that the circle stands for the new Day Centre and the outside zone the site on which the Day Centre is situated. The upper half of the circle stands for the upstairs portion of the proposed building, the lower half the downstairs portion. Both up and downstairs portions were further divided into front and back regions.

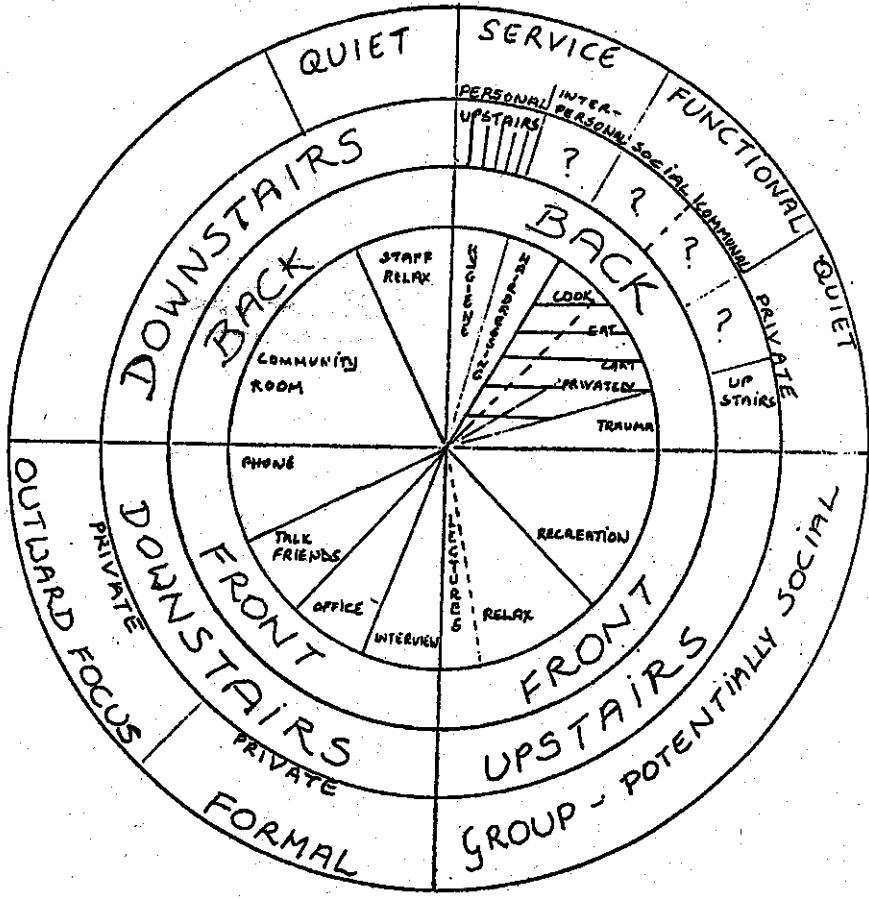
The activities which the new building was to accommodate were presented to the future users on stickers. Each player was instructed to place the stickers on the board, putting those activities which he considered related, closer together on the board, and those not related further apart. Players were then asked to draw circles around the groupings of related activities which they had made.

Statistical analysis of this information allowed a general model of the Day Centre to be put forward. In the inner circle of this model can be seen the activities which the users wished the building to accommodate. Solid lines indicate that the users conceived of these activities as being separate; whereas activities separated by dotted lines were regarded as being related. This revealed not only the places which the users wanted but also the relations between these places.

The second and third circles indicate respectively the region (back and front) and level (upstairs and downstairs) of the building seen by the users to be associated with the activities shown in the inner circle. For example, there was general agreement that activities such as interviewing and office work should occupy the front of the building at ground floor level.

Horizontally hatched segments of the model indicate role group differences in the conceptualisation of (the respective) hatched activities. For example, the evidence suggested that cooking and eating were regarded as part of the formal Day Centre programme by the staff because they considered the social interaction which occurred at meal times to be of therapeutic value to the girls. The girls on the other hand regarded these activities in purely functional terms. These role-related differences in conceptualisation of activities relate to the different objectives and perceptions of the staff and girls.

General Model of the New Day Centre: Model of Place.



| separate | grouped; |||≡ conflict area.

Question marks denote that user's opinions were evenly split on the issues in question. For example, the majority of users felt that hygiene activities, e.g. toilet, shower, etc., should be placed at the back of the building but consensus was not reached on whether up or downstairs location was preferable. The final step

Involved the users in designating the qualities of the places which were to accommodate those activities. This involved specification of user's conceptions of the future building. This was done by analysis of a questionnaire which was designed using the facet theory approach. The emergent qualities of places can be seen in the outmost circle.

The model summarised the users' needs around which the design solution was created. This solution was presented to the users, compromise were made and agreement was reached on a final plan.

### Evaluation

The building was completed and occupied immediately. Six months later a post-occupancy evaluation was carried out by Cody. (1982). The evaluation showed that the designer had been successful in translating user needs into a design solution.

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- CANTER, D. (1977). The Psychology of Place, Architectural Press, London.
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