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Integration of Social Life with Urban Space Syntax – opponent report

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According to your request I am sending the opponent report for Ph.D. thesis by Mgr. Najeh Mohamed Mohamed Al-Ibrahim with the theme: „Integration of Social Life with Urban Space Syntax“.

The Recency of the Thesis Theme

The chosen theme for Ph.D. thesis "Integration of Social Life with Urban Space Syntax" is actual from several points of view. Ph.D. theme develops previously discussed questions research about links between the spatial structure of the city and life in these structures - "life between buildings". Newly is open a question about comparison of the spatial structure of cities and towns with cultural - social environment, i.e. looking for relationship in the trajectory city-society-city.

Thesis Methodology

Ph.D. thesis is divided into ten chapters whose are widely divided into several sub-chapters. In the beginning of the paper are defined research goals and methodology. First three chapters focus on theoretical approaches – Mental Space and Physical Space (Chapter 1), Spatial Cognition and Culture (Chapter 2) and Space Syntax and Spatial Cognition (Chapter 3). There follow two chapters focused on Cultural Dimension of Urban Form, the Muslims one (Chapter 4) and the European one (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 and 7 are dedicated to case studies (Damascus and Brno) and their comparisons and findings (Chapters 8 and 9). The last chapter concludes the work and its findings.

The main used tools and procedures include: space syntax software to analyze space configuration characteristics of the study area in question, a questionnaire to examine people's satisfaction with their local place, a cognitive mapping test and on-site observation of pedestrian traffic.

The thesis has coherent structure; the methodological approach is adequate to research objective.

Research Objectives Solution

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the association between configuration features and cognitive representations and thus throw light on how the difference in people's cultural background affects this association. This investigation was discussed in the light of the following questions:

- 1) Does spatial cognition run in parallel to the congruence between environment structure and people's values and other cultural considerations and is there a link between spatial cognition and people's satisfaction about their local place?
- 2) How does people's satisfaction about their local place affects the association between space configuration and spatial cognition?
- 3) Which of the cultural values are most associated with the findings of spatial cognition?

All of the research objectives are clearly formulated and the thesis answered them. **The research objectives are fulfilled equally.**

Research Findings and its Importance for Science

The work brings to the Czech academic sphere number of new perspectives on the problem of urban space and the syntax. It seems not too much suitable to compare "Islamic" and "European" cities (mainly due to the fact that between examples from "European" cities are placed, e.g. the city of Milétos in Asia Minor or the town Tingad in Africa (p. 71). There are also named some example of typical House from Saudi Arabia (p58) between examples from Islamic cities but there is visible its origin from the pre-Islamic construction period of cities in the Middle East. From this point of view, it would be better to focus on the comparison of the Islamic and Christian traditions in the construction of the city, or vice versa to define comparison territorially - to the European towns and cities of the Middle East ones.

Thesis Adjustment

Material represents 189 pp., the main part - text of the Ph.D. thesis is on 158 pp. The size of Ph.D. thesis is slightly above standard.

The thesis is based on 105 titles of biography including web pages all in English language. The list of biography is adequate.

The Adjustment of the Ph.D. thesis is appropriate.

Final Evaluation of the Thesis

Ph.D. thesis is in very good quality from the subject – matter point of view and brings adequate number research data, their analysis and also adequate findings. The research goals are fulfilled.

I recommend the Ph.D. thesis by Mgr. Najeh Mohamed Mohamed Al-Ibrahim for a plea and I recommend to cap Mgr. Najeh Mohamed Mohamed Al-Ibrahim the title Ph.D.

(Předloženou práci doporučuji k obhajobě a Mgr. Najehu Mohamedu Mohamedu Al-Ibrahimovi doporučuji udělit titul Ph.D.)



doc. Ing. arch. Vladimíra Šilhánková, Ph.D.