

PROXIMITY ON THE MOVE

Urban Times and Mobility: Infrastructures,
Lifestyles and Everyday Practices in the
Contemporary European City
ENCiTi (European Network City Times)

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PRESENTATION

Proximity is an element of quality that also builds our identity and our quality of life.

We propose the theme of proximity as an objective of urban quality (also of equity and development) for the European cities of the third millennium. The issue of proximity has become important today because of an increased mobility of the population, particularly in metropolitan areas.

Citizens are thus increasingly in the condition of temporary inhabitants of public spaces, in the sense that, for a short period of time they physically take possession of a place.

This temporary presence demands a specific hospitality for citizens, people who have a body, a gender, age, a culture of their own, among others. Such hospitality must be balanced according to the schedule of use of the place: for example, between those who quickly pass by and those who inhabit it for a longer period.

But it is the services and social relationships of "proximity" which give material welfare to the citizens, in different ways and with different meanings depending on the time spent in the places they inhabit.

Therefore the question is: Which are the "layers" of proximity (cultural, spatial, temporal, ...) and how can we design proximity in a high mobility context?

We consider mobility, urban times and public space as the project field in which planners and administrators can design and give shape to proximity. By operating on these dimensions, the infrastructures are laid for a city that is "closer" to its inhabitants.

FOCUS OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference aims at investigating the contexts where the issue of proximity is relevant, and how. For example:

- ✚ in the Public Administration, in the services it provides and in the forms of participated democracy
- ✚ in transportation ("intelligent" cars, public transport, ...);
- ✚ at the workplace, where *multilocation* brings up the question of which type of proximity should be granted;
- ✚ Within the family (parent/children relationships, support services for parents to enhance proximity with their children, in couples where life tends to separate them rather than facilitate proximity, ...);
- ✚ In the home with its spatial layout;
- ✚ In the recreational dimension;
- ✚ In public spaces and hybrid spaces
- ✚ In nodal spaces of mobile proximity, such as intermodal transport nodes;
- ✚ During the day and during the night
- ✚ In communication devices and in the Media (TV, newspapers, magazines...)
- ✚ In populations with different cultures (kinesics and proxemics, ...)
- ✚ ...

ARGUMENTS FOR THE DEBATE

The notion of *proximity* addresses the relation between service and body.

We assume the point of view of the individual/inhabitant. Possible scenarios may be:

1) Proximity to the person in movement. For high mobility citizens zigzagging over a vast territory, the proximity relations are becoming more complicated: between service and place of residence, but also for children and parents with an increasing demand of services for people in motion;

2) Proximity in the same space. Because of the scarcity of proximity services in the historical centers of the cities but also in new residential neighborhoods, an increasing number of citizens find themselves in difficulty: elderly people, students, mothers with children. These are in general low mobility citizens, moving only in relatively reduced areas. From this point of view, the concept of proximity (of the service to the body) is coincident with that of neighborhood service, a spatial concept relating to the place of residence;

3) Time oriented proximity of a person. This scenario is referred to the impact of new technologies and the relative application of them in the construction of communities at different scales that shatters the traditional relationship between time and space when we make reference to setting an appointment. But also the problem of the emergencies, that requires precise information and indications in order to determine a precise time and place;

4) Proximity in the built space. The urban perimeter, the city, which is also proximity between buildings, services, among others, where citizens can move effortlessly. It is the connection to the "construction of the city" and of its quality of functions, social relations, density, contiguity among residential buildings, public spaces, monuments, built shape.

5) Imposed or chosen Proximity. Which type of proximity improves the quality of life (chosen proximity) and which appears to be an improper interference and "oppressive" of the private sphere (imposed proximity);

6) Perception of proximity as a sensorial experience.

7) Proximity and emergency;

8) Proximity and the urban chronotope;

9) ...