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Unravelling Safety Through Place, People and Things

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Relating Systems Thinking and Design
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Unravelling Safety Through Place, People, and Things

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Systems theory highlights that understanding underlying structures is critical to knowing why systems behave the way they do and reinforce that these structures are a key point of intervention for systems change (Meadows, 2008). The pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine crisis have brought forth proof of how everything is connected at multiple levels and how one small change at the micro level brings about a massive effect. Mapping, reading, and making sense of systemic interrelationships in the staggeringly complex situation to lead to safety has become a high priority.

Safety has been one of the most critical factors for human system evolutions, be it the design of civilizations, food security or the race towards weaponization. Humans have continually designed to create objects and environments that create a sense of safety and comfort for them. The meaning of safety remains the same, despite changing circumstances and contradictions of scale. Depending on the socio-economic background, experiences of spaces are different for different people.

Keywords: Safe places, Deciphering physical spaces, Place-making, Scenario mapping

Categories: Architecture & Planning

Description

In the levels of safety – physical and psychological, the psychological is strongly affected by physical, while physical safety is affected strongly by the surrounding environment and the elements within, both animate and inanimate. This workshop moves beyond the private home environment to safety in public and aims to decipher safety in a

physical context through a systemic design tool. A systems mapping helps recognize the often elusive problematic nodes and their interconnections, develop a holistic understanding of the often hard-to-grasp and define root causes (Sevaldson, 2019). Most importantly, systemic design visualization and analysis empower one to determine the most opportune leverage point to make potential interventions (Meadows, 2008).

In this workshop, we explore methods drawn from design to realize how people understand and utilize 'systems' concerning public spaces and how they experience a space both physically and psychologically in the context of safety. Through the collective intelligence of this interactive workshop, we would use tools for deciphering safety in physical places.

The tool helps decode identity tensions, be it gender, social structure, or cultural aspects. The workshop is in a series to encourage designers, planners, architects, geographers, citizens, and policymakers to use systemic thinking in design for safe placemaking. The workshop outcomes will hinge on collaborative synergy and virtual group work, while the heterogeneity of the participants, their identities and varied experiences will add multi-dimensionality to the collective understanding of replicating this tool in other contexts.

Format

Time duration: 90 minutes

The workshop will be held Online - through zoom.

Maximum 25 participants who will need access to Miro.

Structure of workshop:

10 minutes – Introduction to facilitators + ground rules + workshop intent

10 minutes – Activity on Miro (individual participants)

5 minutes – Introduction to tool and context setting for participants (Part A of Tool)

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20 minutes – Participants work individually on the scenario matrix; deciphering physical spaces with prompt cards

5 minutes – Introduction for synthesis (Part B of the tool)

20 minutes – Plot in commonalities or contradictions (outcomes)

5 minutes – Discussant rules

20 minutes – Final sharing and insights

References

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