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People and the city: Unveiling the lived urban environment of Doha

Ashraf M. Salama, Florian Wiedmann, Alain Thierstein

Qatar University, Doha, QATAR; Technische Universität München, München, GERMANY

asalama@qu.edu.qa

Background and Objectives:

This study examines the production of urbanism by focusing on the collective spatial practice and inhabitants' perceptions of the urban environment in emerging cities, with Doha as a case study. While the built environment is necessarily an important and obvious aspect of cities, this study attempts to apply a holistic approach to the understanding of what the reality of the space of a city is - beyond the face value of its concrete, urban reality. Therefore, the notion of the lived space is introduced to illustrate how it can be utilized to identify factors necessary for understanding the process of space production. In this respect, it is vital to understand the role of inhabitants and how they comprehend, appreciate, and appropriate urban environments with a focus on two main factors: urban identity and urban diversity.

Methods:

A set of various methodologies is applied to investigate the complex interrelationship between urban environments and human behavior. The two main categories of selected methodologies are observation studies focusing on mapping urban spaces and movements and, secondly, a survey questionnaire that aims integrating the individual views of inhabitants. After conducting a typo-morphological analysis of key urban spaces in Doha, behavioral mapping was applied to survey the use of these spaces by inhabitants according to days of the week and various times of day. The questionnaire was distributed to 350 employees working in high-service sectors in order to assess their perception of certain urban environments and their general experience of living in Doha.

Results and Conclusions:

The analysis and combination of these two types of empirical studies led to various recognitions relevant to the complex relationships between physical urban developments and Doha's inhabitants. Since the urban environment of the city has been undergoing major transformations finding answers to the question of how inhabitants are part of this kind of urbanism and how they may contribute to the diversification process and the establishment of a vibrant hub is essential.