

THE TOURIST AND THE CITY. ON ORIENTATION IN UNKNOWN URBAN SPACE

Anna Agata Kantarek

D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch., Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology,
Kraków 31-155, 24 Warszawska St., Poland,
email: akanta@poczta.onet.pl

Abstract

This paper concentrates on the spatial dimension of a city and human perceptive abilities in its reality.

A tourist is an exceptional person in a space which is unknown to him. He usually has a very general and virtual image of the place he wants to visit, often seen as a mosaic of fragmented pieces. He also has some quite well-defined targets and a limited timetable.

Do our cities help him to orient himself in its space, unknown but desired and targeted?

This paper formulates several rules which are helpful for better exploration of an unknown space in a city. They are based upon the theory of Orientation in Urban Space /A.A. Kantarek *On Orientation in Urban Space*, Cracow University of Technology Press, Kraków, 2008/ where *Orientation Codes of Urban Space* are formulated: *the own codes of a form, signalling codes, mass transmission codes and other codes incorporated in culture.*

Keywords: orientation in urban space, urbanism, urban composition, urban form

Introduction

This article deals with orientation in the space of a city related to a person who does not know it, stays in it and moves during a tourist trip. The article presents basic information on orientation in the space of a city as well as some outlooks upon the conditions of a tourist's orientation in an unknown urban space.

Orientation in Urban Space

The theoretical basis related to orientation in urban space is included in the book "On Orientation in Urban Space"¹. In this paper, I only present a short summary which is necessary to develop a reflection concerning the relation between this orientation and city tourism.

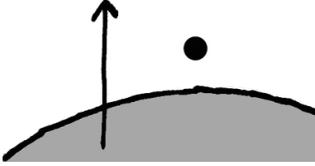
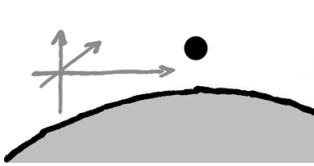
The notion of orientation formed on the basis of relations in the physical space /Pic. 1/. A definition says that orientation is "the recognition, determination of a location in relation to the cardinal points"², hence a reference to organisms' biological ability³. Further on, the definition says that orientation is "also an ability to assess a situation"⁴. Thus, location in a space and the awareness of this location is the basis of orientation.

¹ A.A. Kantarek *On Orientation in Urban Space*, Cracow University of Technology Press, Kraków, 2008

² [After:] [Kopaliński, 1989], p. 369

³ [After:] [Encyclopedia, 1998], p. 599, orientation is "animals' biological inborn ability to recognize directions in the environment on the basis of external stimuli; it facilitates directional locomotive reactions – finding desired places and avoiding harmful ones (...)"

⁴ [After:] [Kopaliński, 1989], p. 369

TOP-BOTTOM BODY RELATION	RIGHT-LEFT BODY RELATION	FRONT- REAR BODY RELATION	MOVEMENT BODY RELATION
Three basic elements: - gravity, - base plane, - sunshine from the top (vestibular, ocular, skin pressure systems according to J.J. Gibson) – awareness of body and head position.	In the material world and most cultures, the right side is privileged.	This elementary distinction is related to movement, purposefulness, communication and action.	They are defined by the direction of movement and its turn, velocity and degree of directness (on foot, by vehicle) as well as the kind of a vehicle and the functions of movement.
Symbolically, the top- bottom relation means the future-past axis (according to Y.F. Tuan).	Symbolically, the right-left relation means: better-worse, sacred-secular, good- bad.	Symbolically, the front means sacred and future, while the rear – secular and past (according to Tuan), representative- tentative, explicit- hidden.	They are related to purposeful action at various levels of awareness and result from relations to people, objects and the environment.
			
			
VERTICAL-HORIZONTAL WORLD RELATIONS	CARDINAL POINTS WORLD RELATIONS	MOVEMENT WORLD RELATIONS	
It is the elementary distinction related to gravity, the sun and the horizon. It determines the external system of coordinates.	They mean relations to the sun, time and the earth.	The environment dynamics – the mutual movement of people, objects and the elements of the environment.	
Symbolically, vertical- horizontal means the godly- earthly, high-low, better-worse axis (according to Y.F. Tuan).	Symbolically, they are related to the sacred-secular relation.	They are defined through experimentation and adopted by culture. According to J. J. Gibson, the overlap and movement of planes in the environment is the basis for its perception.	

Pic. 1. The basis of spatial orientation – physical relations between the human body and a space [Kantarek, 2008]

***Orientation in urban space* is defined like this: “it is the whole of man’s psychophysical and spiritual abilities to define his place in the physical space of a city and in relation to the meanings it carries. It should be treated as the basis for purposeful moving, acting and being in an urban space as well as establishing values and meanings.”⁵**

On one hand, these ruminations are limited to an urban space; on the other hand, a realistic outlook on a person, whose orientation is influenced by external and internal factors in various manners and to different extents, is accepted here.

We must also add that the notion of orientation is the key to all of man’s vital activities. Even though we are aware of it only when something is missing /critical situations, disabilities/, its role is

⁵ cf. [Kantarek, 2008], p. 125

essential for our existence. It helps us to coordinate and rationalize our actions in the physical, mental or spiritual dimension.



Pic. 2. The orientation codes of an urban form – The Main Market Square in Kraków, [Kantarek, 2008], a – own codes of a form, b – signalling codes, c – mass transmission codes, d – other codes incorporated in culture

TYOLOGY	EXAMPLES OF TYPES
1) according to a place	places of residence, a house, neighbourhood places of work, study places of relaxation, recreation, destination places of movement characteristic places – the centre, districts
2) according to movement in time	everyday in a several-day, monthly, yearly cycle formal untypical
3) according to movement – kinds of movement and vehicles	on foot by bike by car by bus by tram driver passenger
4) according to people – age, psychophysical condition, culture	child adult elderly person disabled person
5) according to people – relations to a city	inhabitant arrival – tourist, guest, employee
6) according to the degree of the knowledge of a space	

Pic. 3. Situations related to spatial orientation. Register of typologies [Kantarek, 2008]

The space of a city, its composition and contents are the bases of stimuli and signals which shape our orientation. Under the contemporary circumstances, an urban form itself with its content as well as other special kinds of transmission “talk”. Hence, a definition of the orientation codes of an urban form⁶. We know four kinds of these codes /Pic. 2/:

A. *The own codes of a form*

These codes are based upon the form of a city. They are esthetic codes which dwell on shapes in various scales and mutual relations. They carry meanings, too – from the small scale of things, through urban detail, perceptual wholes and their sequences, to some imaginary wholes.

B. *Signalling codes*

It is information concerning the organization of movement in a city and the purpose of areas /signalization related to communication, addresses, nomenclature and the proper names of places/. Transmission happens through signs formulated on the basis of a written language and images interpreted according to some strictly defined conventions.

C. *Mass transmission codes*

These codes mainly use a written language and an image. An image, applied in a narrative manner here, tries to produce diverse manners of transmission. The codes usually form an advertising message which, being commercialized, acts in the public zone in the name of narrow private groups. Its range and thematic domain are becoming wider and wider. Considering their effectiveness, mass transmission codes also include messages in the sphere of politics, shape opinions in the field of generally understood culture and customs. These days, mass transmission uses more and more sophisticated manners. These codes aggressively force their way into the reality of a city – they comprise the entire facades of buildings and combine various types of transmission. In their extreme shape, they suggest scenarios of spending time.

A very significant feature of this transmission is the fact of its being external in relation to the space where its carriers are found. The expressive logos of the companies and institutions they popularize are basic elements for this message. Thus, the carriers of mass transmission in a space act as elements which alienate us from given places owing to their repeatability as well as the narrations they offer.

D. *Other codes incorporated in culture*

They are all the remaining codes used by the city dwellers, including the codes of information and events which – as the whole of the process of communication – exist in an urban space in an obvious way. They include both personal codes, related to the story of life, based on subjective feelings and diversified, and numerous conventional codes built anew. Their coexistence and interaction with an urban form is obvious, unusually dynamic and elusive.

Although they are mentioned at the very end, these codes are essential as the most obvious and elementary ones related to our lives.

Pic. 2 helps to understand the content of individual orientation codes more thoroughly.

A lot of factors have an impact on orientation in urban space, while typology may be determined according to various criteria. They are shown in Pic. 3.

City Tourism

According to a popular definition, **tourism “... comprises all the activities of people who travel continually and stay for recreational, professional or other purposes not longer than for one year beyond their everyday surroundings.”**⁷

Classification related to the degree of the knowledge of a new, interesting tourist space is especially interesting. On account of the kind and range of tourist activity, we distinguish tourist spaces of exploration, penetration, assimilation, colonization and urbanization⁸.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 86,87

⁷ [Terminologia turystyczna, zalecenia ONZ, 2010]

⁸ [Turystyka w przestrzeni, 2010], according to Liszewski S. (2008), “Geografia urbanistyczna”, Wyd. Politechniki Łódzkiej, Łódź

The tourist space of exploration is an unknown space being discovered for tourist purposes. The range of exploration and its impact on changes in the explored environment is limited.

The tourist space of penetration is essential for tourism; it concerns movement, sightseeing, education, cognition and relaxation. This space is changed in relation to tourist movement. New investments spring up, while the environment is transformed for the sake of new functions. Excessive tourist movement may lead to unbalance in its development.

The tourist space of assimilation means a space where a tourist willingly adjusts to the existing cultural environment, while the service of tourist movement does not mean the creation of barriers to a local community.

The tourist space of colonization means the creation of extensive grounds whose functions are related to the service of tourists only /complexes of hotels, watering places, summer or tourist villages/, while their area is excluded from general use. We often talk about the tourist space of urbanization when permanent residents of such complexes appear /as tourists and the owners, not as service employees/.

Defining **an urban tourist space** is of high importance. It is “a social product which means that, in defined conditions of the development of civilization, the space of a city is considered as cognitively or recreationally interesting”⁹ which is related to the development of the tourist function inside. This notion confirms the intuitive opinion that an entire city is not the object of tourist interest to an equal extent, and that we can talk about channels or defined trails of tourist movement, about objects of special interest.

In our ruminations, we mostly refer to the urban, tourist space of penetration.

A Tourist in the Space of a City

The elementary conditions of the presence of a tourist in the space of the city he is visiting could be summed up like this:

- presence in this space is voluntary,
- this presence is also purposeful – it was chosen on account of the objectives defined in this space as well as the range of a tourist’s interests,
- the manner of visiting a space was chosen, too, including the time and range of self-reliance in sightseeing,
- other conditions are the individual features of a tourist and the group he is travelling with as well as the /temporal, financial/ means he has to spare,
- and the quality of a space, its composition and the degree of its preparation for entertaining a tourist, also from the perspective of legibility /i.e. features related to orientation/.

Therefore, the presence of a tourist in a city always concerns just a fragment of urban reality – selected functions and a defined list of places to see, including those rarely visited by the permanent residents.

At the same time, a tourist has a very clear /although not always compatible with reality/ idea of what he wants to see or participate in. It is seldom related to the holistic image of a city and its spatial structure; it rather concerns specific places /objects, events/ or general associations /atmosphere, a view, the sunshine, quiet, climate/. In a /very broad/ sense, a city remains inscrutable to him.

Paradoxically, however, a tourist’s consciousness produces a holistic image of a city resulting from the impact of the abovementioned factors – a little fabulous and idealized but comprising the levels of a whole /atmosphere, the range of interests/ and a detail /places, objectives, manners of spending time/.

What conditions of orientation in urban space should be distinguished then?

A tourist realizes a programme based on certain objectives that are often unrelated spatially. His movement around a city is not burdened with any complicated everyday assignments – moving between his destinations, he can devote his attention to observation /direct or taking photographs, making comments/. A tourist also confronts reality with his ideas in the normal course, makes “discoveries” which change his mental image of a city. Staying in a city is also related to a necessity

⁹ Ibid.

of taking immediate decisions which concern the space and the time. The range of passiveness and activeness in relation to them differs, too. It depends on individual predispositions as well as the sociological circumstances /the degree of affiliation to a group of tourists etc./.

What are the conclusions for shaping legibility in the urban space of a city from the perspective of visitors' requirements?

Let us begin with the necessity of guaranteeing broadly understood comfort to tourists. These people are exposed to stressful situations in contact with an unknown space and in travelling conditions. The principal matters are the feeling of safety, climatic, temporal and spatial comfort /keeping spatial distances, accessibility, choice/ as well as the standard of a space.

The first principle, being the basis for creating good orientation in general¹⁰, is the simplicity and expressiveness of elements responsible for orientation. Obviously, it is also a question of the rank of objects and statistics defining the degree of interest in individual objects if objects are or can be exposed. However, from the viewpoint of the holistic structure of a city, the basic thing is the creation of a cohesive complex composed in an urban scale. Thus, attention to the whole /a cohesive, composed urban form and its expressive sequences, a solution of transport accessibility, attractiveness and functional compatibility/ is orienting in itself and makes it possible to create numerous diverse routes and trails with different preferences.

As I have already mentioned, a tourist begins his journey with a certain idea of his destination /even if it just concerns an escape from everyday reality/. Nowadays, tourism is created with an enormous information material which gets through to potential tourists as an advertising message. It is produced by cities and regions, by tourist offices and organizations /and others related to health, entertainment etc./, the owners of means of transport or individual attractive places. Contemporary narrative advertising gives propositions of spending one's free time. The image of the place which a tourist wants to visit is formed in such a manner.

So, **the second principle of creating good conditions for a tourist's orientation in a city should be a careful reference to its guidebook and internet image.** It seems to be a rather artificial yet necessary postulate because only such an attitude guarantees the application of elements which already shape potential tourists' imagination and knowledge.

The third principle is the acceptance of the maximum number of diverse manners of visiting a city and its individual attractions by creating many routes and trails connecting the target destinations. Their good marking and maximum attractiveness is an obvious necessity.

The fourth principle, resulting from the coexistence of the orientation codes of an urban form in a space¹¹, **is attention to the harmonious application of the orientation codes of an urban form.** A reference to signalization or advertising elements should be well thought-out because an urban form and its formal elements finally shape our perception of urban reality. But which elements of a form are the most important?

In a study concerning tourists who move across a city on foot¹² [Millonig A., Schechtner K., 2006], the authors draw our attention to the role of landmarks. The comprehension of these marks is quite broad and goes far beyond the definition of an landmark as a dominant. In this comprehension, each element /a signpost, an advertisement, a special sign, a dominant/ plays the role of such a sign regardless of the durability and explicitness of its situation. It gives some interesting material for a discussion on the notion of a dominant feature, an accent and a landmark which by no means discredits their role in orientation in urban space.

In the summer of 2009, some research was carried out which aimed at examining the state of tourists' knowledge of an urban space before a journey and comparing it with the degree of the knowledge of this space after a fortnight's sojourn. The research¹³ was done on a group of students and

¹⁰ In detail, the economy of a form amounts to the inclusion of the maximum number of information in one element and one item of information in many elements, cf. [Kuryłowicz, 1996], p. 79

¹¹ Balance in the activity of these codes, based on their synthesis through the codes of a form and for the development of other codes incorporated in culture, leads to the so-called *orientation of balance*, cf. [Kantarek, 2008].

¹² [Millonig A., Schechtner K., 2006]

¹³ [Kantarek, 2009], typescript

academic teachers working in Évora at a workshop concerning disabled people in the space of historic cities¹⁴.

Évora is an exceptionally beautiful city. It extends around a hill where the Romans located their colony and then a fortified town was built in the Middle Ages. The silhouette of Sé Cathedral, the ramparts and the ruins of Diana's Roman temple make the main elements of this urban form shaping the image of the city.



Pic. 4. Évora – elements supporting orientation in urban space
a – panorama, b – Sé Cathedral, c – Diana's temple, d – ramparts,
e – relief, f – Giraldo Square, g - University

a
b c
d e
f g

¹⁴ Erasmus IP Architectural Workshop LOTUS – Let's Open Cities For Us, Évora'2009

Forty-five people participated in Part A of the research /a survey carried out shortly after arriving in the city/ and thirty-two people – in Part B /a survey carried out after a fortnight’s sojourn/. They were asked questions about the city’s most important public spaces and buildings, about its landmarks, the most significant elements of its urban structure and those elements of its structure which are helpful in orientation. The quoted results are presented in Pic. 5, 6, 7, 8¹⁵.

As far as selecting the most important buildings in the city is concerned /Pic. 5/, it turned out that knowledge before arriving in the city quite tallied with later opinions. An object /Diana’s temple/ as well as an urban square /Giraldo Square/ were acknowledged as the most important in both surveys. Before arrival, the role of the university /where the classes were held/ was overestimated, while the role of the cathedral was underestimated. The role of urban squares was noticed, too. It was noteworthy that open public spaces /other squares/ were appreciated in Survey B.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLIC SPACES AND BUILDINGS IN THE CITY				
	Survey A		Survey B	
	votes	%	votes	%
Diana’s temple	28	62,2	25	78,1
Giraldo Square	28	62,2	25	78,1
University	13	28,9	11	34,3
Sé Cathedral	12	26,7	22	68,8
other squares			10	31,2

Pic. 5. Survey Évora’2009. The most important public spaces and buildings in the city

In the landmark category /Pic. 6/, the survey showed many altered opinions. The role of the ramparts, the Cathedral and Giraldo Square was highly assessed. As many as eight people did not give any responses in Survey A.

LANDMARKS				
	Survey A		Survey B	
	votes	%	votes	%
Diana’s temple	11	24,4	12	37,5
ramparts	8	17,8	17	53,1
Sé Cathedral	6	13,3	13	40,6
University	5	11,1	5	15,6
Giraldo Square	4	8,9	12	37,5
aqueduct	2	4,4	8	25,0

Pic. 6. Survey Évora’2009, landmarks

Several objects, open public spaces /one square – Giraldo which was the most popular/ and a structural feature /topography/ were acknowledged as those elements of the structure which help in orientation /Pic. 7/. The biggest change of assessment concerns the topography itself /from 11.1% to 28.1%/.

¹⁵ In this research, some numbers of votes were given, while those whose amount was less relevant were omitted. Since the pollees could give any number of objects and spaces, the calculated percentages do not add up to 100% – they show the percentage of people who referred to them.

ELEMENTS OF THE STRUCTURE IN SUPPORT OF ORIENTATION				
	Survey A		Survey B	
	votes	%	votes	%
Giraldo Square	21	46,7	16	50,0
ramparts	11	24,4	9	28,1
Sé Cathedral	8	17,8	5	15,6
topography	5	11,1	9	28,1
Diana's temple	4	8,9	4	12,5

Pic. 7. Survey Évora'2009, elements of the structure in support of orientation

An analysis of responses concerning the most important elements of the urban structure /Pic. 8/ clearly shows that further acquaintance with the space of a city alerts people to the role of open public spaces of junction character and the topography of an area /on this account, Évora is a special place/ as well.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE				
	Survey A		Survey B	
	votes	%	votes	%
street configuration and structure	15	33,3	10	31,3
ramparts	11	24,4	10	31,3
Giraldo Square	6	13,3	8	25,0
topography	2	4,4	7	21,9

Pic. 8. Survey Évora'2009, the most important elements of the urban structure

Now we can return to the question: which elements of a form are the most important in proper orientation in an urban space? The presented examples of research show that elements of landmark or dominant character, open junction public spaces as well as special features of an urban form /location on slopes/ are significant and comprehensible in orientation in urban space. The cognition of a space makes people appreciate features related to the conditions of motion and action /a square, a street, a tilt/.

To sum up, we must state that – from a tourist's viewpoint – improvements in the perception of an urban space and the possibility of good orientation in it are related to numerous factors which mainly concern the generally accepted principles of good urban composition with simplicity and expressiveness of elements responsible for orientation. However, we should remember that a tourist forms an image of the space he is going to visit on the basis of accessible information /guidebooks and the Internet mostly/ and has a precise idea of his destination. Even though it is not urban planners' task, work on the cohesiveness of this image with reality is extraordinarily important. The examples of research prove that an unknown space is structured by objects /landmarks/ rather than urban interiors or topography. Therefore, a city is expected to suggest some pronounced sequences of routes and trails of spatial penetration /necessarily of very diverse character depending on tourists' interests and destinations/ binding objects and urban interiors which are significant from a tourist's point of view.

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