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PRESENTATION FORMAT

Poster

DESCRIPTION

This poster will present preliminary evidence of the need for facilitating greater ease and/or ability with respect to personalization activities in migrant and refugee housing and suggest opportunities for design intervention. Connections will be made to territoriality and how humans claim space by means of visual cues.

KEYWORDS

Territory, Personalization, Psychology, Refugee Housing

PERSONALIZATION, TERRITORY, AND THE REFUGEE HOUSING CRISIS

The use of personally significant items to demarcate space occurs across cultures, though what each culture considers personally significant varies. Personalization is directly tied to humans' territorial instincts and symbolically informs others that an environment has been claimed by an individual (Hirschon and Gold, 1982). According to M. J. Stillman, territoriality is defined as "...behavior by which an organism...lays claim...and defends...against members of his own species" (1978, p. 1670). Territorial behavior in humans is rooted in instincts to prevent overcrowding and ensure proper distribution of resources. It "...involves claiming space by occupancy, though this need not be permanent, and entails personalizing or marking the space in a way that conveys ownership to other people" (Hirschon and Gold, 1982, p. 64).

A growing concern exists globally for migrant and refugee housing. An estimated 65.6 million people are living in temporary accommodations; the UNHCR reports that in 2016, nearly 5.2 million refugees arrived in Europe alone (2017). Transitional housing conditions are associated with such issues as loss of control and territory reduction. C. Brun explains that for many displaced persons, "displacement is experienced as being physically present at one place, but ... having feelings of belonging somewhere else" (2001, p. 15). Reterritorialization, the process by which a refugee reconstructs a sense of identity in a new place, is by necessity related to the physical space, temporary or otherwise, the refugee comes to occupy. The ability to personalize this space contributes to the displaced person's sense of identity and wellbeing.

Personalization in transitional housing is underrepresented in published literature, particularly with regard to the role design might play in dispelling anxiety in such environments. The exploration of design as a medium to improve the lives of displaced persons is critical, in order to better understand how to address the demand for temporary housing in a way which is culturally sensitive and facilitating of refugees' needs for territory and control over their environments.

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Hirschon, R., & Gold, J. (1982). Territoriality and the Home Environment in a Greek Urban Community. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 55(2), 63-73.

Stillman, M. (1978). Territoriality and Personal Space. *The American Journal of Nursing*, 78(10), 1670-1672.

USA for UNHCR. (n.d.). USA for UNHCR | Rebuilding lives of Refugees. Retrieved September 12, 2017, from <http://www.unrefugees.org/>