


Chapter 9

Well-Being Concept and Interior Design Process: The Intersection Between Humanities and Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Well-being is an ephemeral condition in relation to the complex system of interconnected components changing from culture to culture and person to person together with time and space. Therefore, it is very important to investigate the intersections of architecture and humanities in order to understand how design can contribute to the way we build up well-being. The specific contribution of this chapter is the introduction of the well-being framework for interiors and its application to design process. The framework proposal, consisting of contextual, functional, psychological, social, ergonomic, aesthetic, and sensory requirements as basic design criteria, aims to support both theoretical and practical activities regarding well-being in all living environments. Since interior space is one of the most important determinants of our everyday experiences, its role in well-being as a conscious construct needs to be an important concern of spatial design.

INTRODUCTION: WELL-BEING AND INTERIOR SPACE

The concept of well-being is studied by many different disciplines and every discipline has its own priorities to approach the issue. Well-being includes every aspect of people's lives including physical health, psychological state, level of independence, family, education, wealth, religious beliefs, employment, social relationships, housing and the environment as a whole. The most prevailing discipline in well-being studies has been psychology and the research in this field is dominated by two different traditions. The hedonic tradition gives importance to constructs such as happiness, positive affect, low negative

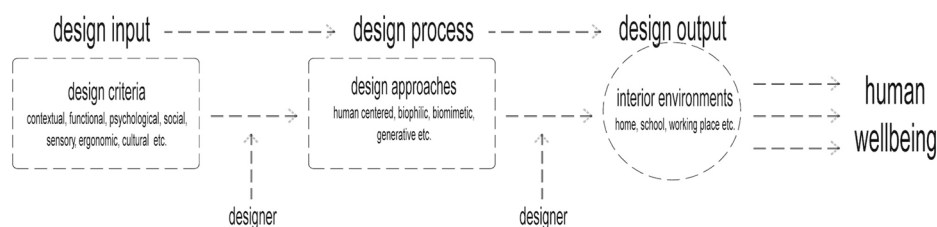
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affect, and satisfaction with life (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) while the eudaimonic tradition concentrates on the positive psychological functioning and human development (Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1993). Architecture and spatial design has the potential to make considerable contributions to both hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions of well-being. While the hedonic tradition is concerned with more aesthetic and sensory aspects of space, the eudaimonic tradition necessitate the consideration of functional, social, psychological aspects related to space. So, looking from the perspective of design, the framework of well-being needs to consider all these different dimensions of well-being as the hedonic and eudaimonic views complete each other in terms spatial needs.

Regarding the importance of design from the perspective of both hedonic and eudaimonic traditions, design can create the right tools with which a person can develop himself and find the right ways to perform his actions for his specific contribution and design can also promote pleasurable experiences and block undesired ones. Moving to the role of interior design we can say that interiors can provide the right environment in which people can be free to perform the actions they chose in the way they want and they can appreciate pleasurable experiences as an outcome of their interaction with space. In this sense the interior environment needs to be evaluated as a very strong determinant of general well-being. This is also because interiors mark out a domain that is controllable in the first step by the designer and in the second step by the user. When people feel in control of their surroundings and environment, they feel empowerment and stability (Shapiro, 1999). This control mechanism needs to be structured in such a way that interior design creates the appropriate stage for living and gives the necessary tools to the user to decide on his well-being himself.

While we consider well-being in interiors, the most important contribution can be about structuring an understanding of design that methodologically supports the concept. This can be possible by evaluating the interior design process in a way that the design criteria handles all the issues that are necessary for well-being in interiors. Like every design activity, interior design also requires certain design input to be evaluated during the design process. As interior design is concerned with creating spaces that support human activities and well-being, the design input is closely related to the human factor as well as potentials of the existing natural and built environment. Therefore at the beginning of the process the designer needs to define the design criteria including contextual and human related data. Then during the design process, he needs to develop a design approach to handle the design criteria with a holistic understanding. As the outcome of the process, interior environments become generators of human well-being (Figure1). In this sense, the issue of well-being in interiors needs to be examined especially in terms of design input and design process proposing a methodological framework that can help the designer during these two vital steps.

Figure 1. Interior design process leading to well-being



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