INTRODUCTION
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The subject matter and its context

Architecture students represent a colorful cultural phenomenon and stimulate a genuine interest in outside observers. This is in part due to the "air" surrounding their profession and the delicate balance they maintain in their lives between their emotional sensitivity and artistic attitude on the one hand, and their disciplined organization of time and work on the other. When observed more closely, it appears that these young people display distinctive patterns of spatial use and surprising daily cycles. If I had any doubts about the real existence of a distinctive architecture student culture, they were greatly diminished after I read an announcement of a photo competition about life in an architectural studio. Its subject matter was the poetics of everyday life in a studio: how architecture students organized and "trimmed" their environ-
ment, engaged in late night work, and conducted overall life in school.

The studio is a basic form of implementing the educational program in architecture. It is the major structure for gaining knowledge, skills, and experience in the field of design. In studio teaching, emphasis is placed on “hands-on” experience: studying by doing, learning by problem-solving, and active participation. From an organizational point of view, the studio can be defined as a room housing several students (7-15) who are supervised by one instructor and one teaching assistant. The studio members form a temporary social group existing in a well-defined physical setting. A studio’s duration is one semester; in the next semester, only a small percentage of the same group of students will continue to work together. The design studio is the core of the curriculum and the most important part of the learning process for architecture students. It is the way architecture is taught. Its major principle is hands-on experience. The studio is the vehicle through which students acquire their most valuable professional knowledge, skills, and experience. Students understand very well that their future as architects is shaped in the studio classes.

From an environmental design research perspective, architecture students can be viewed as schoolhouse users who deserve close attention and should be provided with spatial resources that best support their goals and behavior. The domain of the present study is delineated by
the traits that are pertinent to the utilization of space in the architectural studio: everyday strategy decisions, adaptation of behavior patterns, values shaping both strategy and choice of patterns, and models of negotiating the use of space.

My initial literature search reflected that research on architecture students usually focuses on educational issues, minorities, and gender relations. The issue of appropriation of space is rarely mentioned. This makes a case for initiating a study that will partially fill the void. Furthermore, it also presupposes that there are not enough knowledge and conceptual models to design a quantitative study, and that the most appropriate approach to the research situation is a qualitative one.

**Searching for previous research:**

**A brief literature review**

There are only a few publications providing information about everyday life and socialization in the architectural studio, and none has the explicit goal to reveal the spatial aspects of studio life and the use of space. There are two distinct areas of study: design methods and pedagogy, and gender and minority issues. These research interests stem from the main concerns of contemporary architectural educators. Design education and its improvement is a major issue in every school of architecture. Gender politics
emerge as a result of the massive influx of women in the American workforce. No doubt these concerns are worthwhile and deserve the resources and attention of the architectural and sociological research communities. In regard to the use of space they are very important; they cannot, however, provide the canvas for building up behavioral rationale for shaping space. Powerlessness and empowerment are basic issues in analyzing the politics of space, but activities, values, needs, and interests constitute the social construction of space.

The everyday spatial behavior of students in a studio hasn’t yet captured the interest of researchers, mainly because everyday life in the studio is not perceived as problematic. There are possibly several reasons for this. First, all faculty have passed through such an initiation and they find it a normal, if not an entertaining, experience. Second, the exotic nature of studio life is attributed to youngsters’ eccentricity, as suggested by the photo competition mentioned above. Third, nobody sees severe social implications of spatial behavior patterns. And fourth, the current research fad is strongly influenced by power and dominance concerns, rather than with the mosaic of everyday life.

Probably the most illuminating article is “Sex, Plugs, and Rock & Roll: Students Talk About Life in Studio” (Ahrentzen, 1992). Most of the points made by the author reemerged in the context of the present investiga-
tion. Although strongly interested in the politics of sex and power, the author pays specific attention to the studio environment and the emerging spatial behavior patterns as antecedents of social relations. Many of the highlighted problems evolve directly from the social effects of human interaction with the physical setting. Sherry Ahrentzen (1992) mentions the shabby appearance in the studio, distractions of various nature, audio contamination, homey attitude, camaraderie, and intensive professional and social interaction and exchange.

Other illuminating accounts of studio rites and behavior patterns can be found in “Architecture: The Story of Practice” (Cuff, 1992). One chapter in her book is devoted to the making of the architect. The emphasis of the study is on the professional culture: beliefs, values, norms, rituals, strategies, and underlying motivations. Studio life is viewed as a major factor in this process. The mechanisms of the socialization process, highlighted by the author, are very important in understanding studio life. The behavior patterns and social attitudes of the young people are influenced strongly by the referent persons and groups who provide role models.

The research agenda

The subject of this study is the cultural specifics of architectural studio life, particularly in regard to its spatial
dimensions. The area of inquiry is narrowed down by concentrating on aspects that are pertinent to the use of space in the architectural studio: everyday decisions, adaptation of behavior patterns, values that shape the choice of patterns, and modes of negotiating the use of space. This information forms the basis of the background knowledge used by architectural designers to envisage and reconstruct the social functioning of spatial patterns. The knowledge about the users provides an implicit frame of reference that directs architects in the process of organizing spaces and masses. In order to shape and "size" a space, designers need information about human activity systems, sociospatial interactions, and preferences.

The architectural studio can be studied through various aspects: educational, organizational, and psychological, to name just a few. Sociologists are interested predominantly in the social structure, power distribution, mechanisms for social control, role analysis, and socialization mechanisms. Social psychologists pay more attention to patterns of group dynamic, leadership, modes of interaction, formation of professional values and attitudes, etc. In general, social scientists are intrigued by the forces that drive groups and societies. Architectural educators are interested predominantly in improving teaching formats, the level of acquiring knowledge and skills, and classroom management strategies. From a facility development perspective, however, the studio is interesting mostly as a hu-
man setting, a micro-social world that needs and requires appropriate support from the physical environment. For the purposes of this study, the studio is viewed in regard to its setting and particularly its physical dimensions. For these reasons, some of the studio aspects that are central to architectural educators may not be envisaged here or may form only an interpretative background. The major focus of interest is the everyday life and its spatial dimensions. The phenomena most strongly underlying the organization of space have a much more mundane character - these are the routines and existential tensions of the individual, which create the mosaic of everyday life.

In the light of these considerations, the goal of the study is to create an animated “picture” of studio life regarding the emerging sociospatial relations. This research goal is formulated to support the broad informational needs and holistic thinking of designers when organizing human settings. The objectives are to reconstruct behavior patterns, to understand everyday values and preferences of students, and to unveil forces that shape everyday life in the studio. Because of restricted resources and time pressure, the study is limited to the overall structure of studio life and the general implications of student behavior regarding the studio setting. This level of generality may be disappointing for some very pragmatic and practical readers. However, the process of knowledge production involves several stages and each one of them makes a contribution and becomes a
springboard to the next level of concretization.

The methodology

The research setting was one of the twelve 400-level (junior/senior) studios. A full physical description of the studio is presented later in this chapter. The setting was selected for several reasons. First of all, I decided to go along with the principle of “extreme case.” The expectation is that an extreme case will contain, in its most developed form, features that are muffled or contaminated in more “traditional” cases. The initial observation and informal interviews showed that there is a phenomenon that can be tentatively called “studio syndrome.” It can be described in terms of unique patterns of appropriation of the studio space, strange time schedules for the use of space, and its exotic environment. In particular, I chose this studio because of the multiple amenities introduced by the students. They created the impression of both a workshop and a shanty town environment. I interpreted this as an indicator for unusual and esoteric culture. “Studio syndrome” is most evidently demonstrated among juniors and seniors. Freshmen and graduate students are not affected by it.

In the process of the study, comparisons were made among the 200-level studios (sophomores), other 400-level studios, 600-level studios (graduate students with or with-
out baccalaureate degree in architecture), and 800-level studios (advanced graduate studios). In most cases the fieldwork with these studios was confined to casual observations and informal conversational interviews. This approach was used extensively to make the findings more obvious and clear by putting them in context or simply by comparison.

The sampling of students for in-depth interviews followed this pattern: one opinion leader (Teo), one very sociable student (Jeff), one who was not exposed to freshmen and sophomore architecture experience (Richard), a young female student (Ann), and an older female student (Amy). (All names are pseudonyms. Occasionally in the text different names may appear to assure privacy.) The intention was to interview representatives of different studio groups in order to catch the diversity and regularities of studio life. The sampling of students was performed after extensive observation and informal conversational interviews.

The basic data collection methods were observation, informal conversational interviews, and guided interviews. The observation was used for initial entry into the site and for gaining basic awareness about the processes taking place there. The observation was directed by personal experience in the studio, general sociological considerations, and informal interviews. The informal interviews were used throughout the entire study. Their purpose was to back up observations, to clarify immediate situations that might shape the future line of observation, and to check the
accuracy and validity of the observations. Guided interviews started after an initial understanding of the situation was acquired. The interview guide was developed on the basis of the issues that emerged in the preliminary investigations. Five interviews were conducted, ranging in duration from one to two hours.

The data analysis was performed by using open coding and selective coding. In addition, several techniques for enhancing theoretical sensitivity were applied. An analysis of phrases was performed in order to bring forth hidden meanings and attitudes. Special attention was placed on sentences and words that seemed important, significant, and/or interesting. The flip-top technique proved to be quite efficient in discovering the meaning of student experiences. Multiple comparisons were made with architecture students from all other levels (200-800). "Close-in" comparisons were made with the second sample studio, and with almost every other studio in the department. Comparisons were made with urban planning students, students from the masters program in architecture, and students who have developed identities in other programs or professions and have just commenced their graduate studies in architecture. Lofland's "thinking units" technique was used alternatively for exploring different possibilities for interpretation (Lofland & Lofland, 2003).