

**AN APPROACH TO CONCEPTUALIZING
THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGE OF
AN URBAN LOCALITY FOR PLANNING**



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Abstract

Recent trends in local level planning have emphasized the importance of enhancing place images. Hence, conceptualizing the form of a locality's image has become a need in urban planning. Having noted the limitations in available approaches, and the knowledge gaps for such conceptualizing through a literature review, this study was undertaken to evolve a conceptual model of the structure of a locality's image. For this purpose the results of an empirical investigation of the inhabitants' cognition were interpreted in the light of theoretical positions established by previous studies. The research was designed on the premises that the 'spatial extent' of the environment constitutes the substantial domain of urban planning and the planners aspire to work in its 'public realm'. Hence, the focus was on the shared spatial references in inhabitants' cognition. The empirical work included a questionnaire survey, a field reconnaissance and a cartographic survey. Referring to the 'invariant' and the 'context specific' characteristics of the findings, it was suggested that the environmental image of a place was a 'unitary' concept and its structure was configured of the 'reference points' both 'collectively' and 'individually' held by the inhabitants. Therefore, the model evolved here was named the *unitary image of the place*. Its 'collective' domain was shown as the potential area for the urban planners to intervene to work about a locality's image and thereby, to integrate inhabitants' cognition with the planning process.

Keywords: Environmental Image, Cognition, Place, Locality, Inhabitants, Spatial Elements.

DEDICATION

To my mother with gratitude.



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