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The development of a hospital design platform: An approach to enhance the aesthetic environmental dimensions of health and well-being

Way finding can be a problem in complex buildings, especially in health care facilities (Carpman & Grant, 2001). In my studies I put the spotlight on hospitals, which contain facilities and services with a large and complex network of circulation that offers a challenge to tracing ones way.

In my study I will use the overlapping among Lynch's terms "landmark" (1960) and "access" (1981) as an approach to explore how artwork can influence the user's perception when tracing their way to a destination. In my investigation art work will be explored in terms of how they may affect the user's perception of the place and invoke their memories; how they can help users to trace their trajectory; and how they can make the environment accessible. My supposition is that art work may both aid way finding and enhance the healing environment inside hospitals.

In my study I will look at a selected hospital: the SUS hospital in Malmö and Lund. I will investigate what aspects of the physical and social environment that aid peoples' way finding; what types of information that are being sought by users (patients, visitors, staff) as they navigate in the hospital facilities; how hospital environments can be understood; and what role the design of interior environments play in the way finding process.

My investigation will be based on spatial and visual analysis of the built environment, which means that I will deal with the hospital environment's physical features and their influence on the way finder's attention. I will especially focus on places of intersection as critical points of decision for choosing to walk one way or the other. The methods that will be used are observation studies of the user's interaction within the physical environment; interviews with different categories of users; and surveys in order to understand operational requirements and demands. As a last step I will make a workshop together with the architectural students in order to examine their understanding of the physical environment in a given hospital through redesign of a chosen health care setting.