

THE LAYERS OF ENVIRONMENT

In this essay I'd like to research environment as a series of non-material layers. In every paragraph I'll go into one layer, expanding from the most personal layer outwards.

PERSONAL SPACE

Where do you stop and the world begin? Is it where your physical body touches the air around it? Or do you also claim some part of that air around you as part of you. How close can someone else get before you feel they're trespassing in 'your space'? For me this space is not fixed, at the moment I'd say it's more or less 5 cm around my body, but at times it can expand to 10 times that space. You can see this personal space, the transition between you, your physical body, and the other, the space or world around, is the first layer of your environment.

MEMORIES

Memories are the most important in thinking about environment this way. Let's split it up in people and things for a moment. People you have never seen before, of whom you have no memories or former knowledge, are rarely part of your environment. The more time you spend with someone - the more memories you get - the more a person will be embedded in your environment. The same goes with places. Places you visit often, become filled with memories and associations. These memories make that you connect with a place and start to see it as part of your environment. This category is, like the first one, continually shifting and expanding. People are making new memories, remembering old things and forgetting other things. If you move out of your house this house will still be part of your environment for some years, but as you move on with your life it will fade away slowly too.

ASSOCIATIONS

This layer of environment might seem to be the close to memories but it is definitely something different. Here are all the people and objects you can relate to, compare with something else, make associations with. You don't have to know these people, objects or ideas but simply the fact that you can place them in relation to something in your environment makes them part as well. This category nearly touches on culture but you have to remember it is still part of your personal environment. It's true though that within a culture this layer will mostly overlap. In this layer the word engagement comes in. Out of the inner layers of environment we build authenticity and autonomy but because there is this overlap in associations we can connect with each other and with society and create engagement.