

Personal space and greetings, breaking down the barriers in a virtual space

by Emilio Aguas

-- Inspiration

During the days of the Spatial Information Laboratory, I was dealing with a cultural shock, so I did a research about that and encountered this information.”Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs are the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not.

These cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which are unconsciously learned.

When an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of good will he may be, a series of props have been knocked from under him. This is followed by a feeling of frustration and anxiety. People react to the frustration in much the same way. First they reject the environment which causes the discomfort: "the ways of the host country are bad because they make us feel bad.”¹

-- Idea

Keeping that in mind I realized that in different cultures the understanding of space is dissimilar, me as a foreigner immersed in the German culture, was the perfect opportunity to comprehend which are the effects of greeting someone that doesn't have the same cultural background as me.

So I want to create a Social Mapping of greetings with the help of the tracking movement room with the idea of Greetings all over the world and the interaction with personal space following the next statement.

In our daily lives we have a lot of interactions with different people and in different situations and spaces such as: in our homes with our relatives, in the public transportation with completely strangers, in our places of work or study with our colleagues. All of these spaces have a lot of effects in our behaviour and how we interact with other people and how we feel.

¹ (2005). WorldWide Classroom: About Culture Shock. Retrieved February 08, 2016, from http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_shock.html.

According to the theory of nonverbal communication there is category named proxemics and the definition is: “Proxemics is the term coined by professor Edward T. Hall, author of such well known works as *The Silent Language* (1959), *The Hidden Dimension* (1969), and *Beyond Culture* (1977), to refer to 'the study of how man uses space - the space that he maintains between himself and his fellows and which he builds around him in his home and office'. It is the study of the ways in which individuals use physical space in their interactions with others and how this use of physical space influences behaviour of all concerned. In the words of Professor Hall, proxemics studies 'how man unconsciously structures microspace - the distance between men in the conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in his houses and building, and ultimately the layout of his towns'.²”

-- Project Description

So the project consist in record different ways the people meet and greet, then do a post processing of the body movements and see how they interact to each others when they invade their personal space or not. Because the space lab gives me the opportunity to have twelve points of view at the same time of every single greeting I propose to show them all at once, representing how from different perspectives we analyze or judge how the people interact.

-- Thanks to

The project could not be done with the help of Liese Luke and Florian as actors who participate for the tracking movements. Tanya Sagitova, Nika Ishandzhanova and Hu Zhenjia for the record of facial expressions in the early stages of the project and Marcel Karnapke for teaching me how to record and track people with the devices.

Project development Link:

http://www.uni-weimar.de/medien/wiki/GMU:Spacial_Information_Lab/Emilio_Aguas

For the final result click the following link:

<https://vimeo.com/155007474>

² (2004). Chapter 2-Proxemics - e-books of Central Institute of Indian ... Retrieved February 08, 2016, from <http://www.ciiil-ebooks.net/html/silent/ch2.htm>.