

Assigning Moral Positions Caused by Environmental Degradation in San Buenaventura Public Housing Complex in Ixtapaluca, State of Mexico, Mexico

Authors : Ángel O. Aldape, José M. Bustos, José G. Guízar

Abstract : Building companies providing public housing in Mexico, such as INFONAVIT, Casas GEO, Casas ARA, among others, provide low-interest home loans for thousands of Mexican families and individuals to buy a home. However, once this goal is achieved, these companies are not responsible for the care and maintenance of green areas and waste collection services because, technically, it is the local municipalities' responsibility to provide these services to the community. However, this does not always occur with local municipalities. To study this problem, the San Buenaventura public housing complex was selected. This housing complex is located in the municipality of Ixtapaluca, State of Mexico (Estado de Mexico), Mexico. To our best knowledge, there are currently no formal studies about San Buenaventura that can offer effective options and/or better ways of sorting and disposing households' wastes, as well as improving local green areas (community gardens and parks). Only a few web-blogs and periodical reports have addressed these serious problems that directly affect the social and psychological well-being of residents. The main goal of this research project aims to improve our understanding towards the existing ontological elements that emerge from residents' discourses (in the form of informal talks and gossip) and discover the socio-physical elements that they use to assign moral positions onto others or onto themselves. The theoretical framework used in this study is based on two constructionist theories: positioning theory and site ontology. The first theory offered the opportunity to explore the rights, duties, and obligations assigned to a social role (or moral position) of the participants. The second theory provided a constructionist philosophical base that includes various socio-physical elements that are considered to assign personal or community meanings to particular contexts. Both theories contributed to defining personal dispositions and/or attitudes to carry out concrete social action or practice. The theoretical framework was guided by a relativistic ontology that allowed the researcher to better interpret the reality of the participants of this study. A descriptive-interpretative methodology was used, and two qualitative methods were arranged based on the theoretical framework proposed as follows: a semi-structured focus group interview, and direct observations. The semi-structured focus group was carried out with four residents of San Buenaventura and covert observations of public spaces and houses were carried out. These were analysed and interpreted by the researcher and assisted by NVivo software. The results suggest that the participants assigned moral traits of responsibility to other residents regarding the problem of the neglect of the green areas and waste pollution. The results suggest that all participants agreed to assign moral traits to other residents making them liable for the environmental degradation and the decay of green areas. They neither assigned any moral duty nor responsible moral traits onto themselves towards environmental protection or destruction. Overall, the participants in this study pointed out that external ontological elements such as the local government, infrastructure or cleaning services were not main cause of these environmental problems but rather the general lack of moral duty and disposition of other residents.

Keywords : conversation, environment, housing, moral, ontology, position, public, site, talks

Conference Title : ICEP 2019 : International Conference on Environmental Psychology

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : May 14-15, 2019