



A representation of place attachment: A study of spatial cognition in Latvia

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Perception of geographical space is reflected in place attachment, i.e. a multidimensional cognitive-affective link between humans and their spatial environment. Place attachment balances emotions, conception of proximity. It is both social and spatial cognitive structure. Place attachment has an impact on people's actions, which in turn reversibly affect the environment in which people live. Place attachment provides emotional regulation for humans linking local – neighborhood-scale and country and world-scale environments.

In Latvia a large-scale spatial cognition study has been conducted within participatory research project „Telpas pavasaris” (“Spatial Spring”) by foundation Viegli. In the study 1523 respondents reported their associations characterizing certain type of places (e.g., safe place, dangerous place, far place, close place, dear place). The answers were analyzed according to several cognitive-affective categories including modes of experience, emotional valence, geographical distance, and perceptual modality.

The current results indicate that socio-cognitive and affective information are primary in respect to purely spatial information (referring to spatial objects or regions and their relations). However, different types of geographical places and spatial objects (natural or artefactual) have to be distinguished and are significant to a different degree. Our results are important for environmental and urban planning because they show the ways how socio-cognitive and affective knowledge shapes the spatial cognition of geographic environment.