

THE GRAMMAR OF SOCIAL SPACE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO HUMAN PROXEMICS¹

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I

Key words: Proxemics, ethology, psychology, social groups, archaeological context.

Abstract: This article is an attempt to introduce a poorly explored aspect of the human social behavior, *proxemics*, from an anthropological point of view and with a projection of its potential into archaeological studies. Proxemics is a term officially attributed to an anthropologist, E. T. Hall, who in the 60s launched this approach to the scenario of social sciences. Proxemics studies the spatial behavior of man, the relationships between individuals in a spatial frame and between individuals or groups and the space itself. It still is a young discipline, mainly because it was seldom employed seriously as a valid and constant approach in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, architecture or urban planning. The origins of this discipline rest on ethology, a biological discipline that studies the animal behavior and borrows a variety of its conceptual elements. We can even notice that classic proxemics, as outlined by its founders (Hall, Watson, Sommer), has a lot to do with animal behavioral studies and approaches the human ecology statements by seeing man and society as one more species on the planet. Proxemics' traditional application into practice is known as ergonomics, a discipline used by space planners and architects in adapting the built spaces to the human needs. Nevertheless, proxemics and its space-applying manifestation, although admitted as crucial by the theories of spatial sciences, still miss from the anthropological and archaeological interpretations of present and past societies.

Cuvinte cheie: Proxemica, antropologie, psihologie, grupuri sociale, contexte arheologice.

Rezumat: Articolul încearcă să aduă la cunoștința cititorului, cel puțin introductiv, unul dintre aspectele cele mai puțin explorate ale comportamentului uman spațial, *proxemica*, dintr-un punct de vedere antropologic laolaltă cu proiectarea potențialului său analitic în terenul studiilor arheologice. Proxemica este un termen atribuit în mod oficial unui antropolog, E. T. Hall, cel care în anii șaizeci a lansat acest tip de studii pe scenariul științelor sociale. Proxemica studiază comportamentul spațial al omului, raportul între indivizi într-un cadru spațial, precum și între indivizi și grupuri pe de o parte și spațiul însuși pe de cealaltă parte. Termenul se referă atât la știința pe care încearcă să o cristalizeze, cât și la comportamentul uman spațial în sine. Aceasta este încă o disciplină tânără în pofida decadelor care au urmat de la „fundarea” sa, mai ales pentru că rareori a fost folosită în mod serios ca o modalitate de studiu constantă și validă în domeniul antropologiei, a arheologiei, a arhitecturii sau a planificării urbane. Începuturile acestei discipline se trag înapoi până la știința etologiei, o disciplină biologică ce studiază comportamentul animal și de la care împrumută o mare parte a câmpului său conceptual. Inclusiv putem observa că proxemica clasică, așa cum fusese propusă de către părinții ei originali (Hall, Watson, Sommer), are multe în comun cu cercetările de comportament și obiceiuri animale și astfel se apropie mult de postura teoretică a ecologiei umane

¹ This is an extended work on topics initially treated in the Master degree thesis “Ser social y espacio social en arqueología” (*Social entity and social space in archaeology*), presented by the author in the National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH), Mexico City, 2001. An earlier version of this paper was published in Mexico in *Boletín de Antropología Americana* 37, 2000-2001.

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care susține că omul și societatea sa sunt doar încă o specie a regnului animal. Punerea în practică a proxemicii este tradițional cunoscută ca ergonomie, „știința confortului”, o disciplină îmbrățișată mai ales de anumiți arhitecți și planificatori urbani pentru a adapta spațiile construite obiceiurilor și necesităților spațiale ale oamenilor. Însă, deși admise ca și cruciale de către teoriile științelor sociale, proxemica și ergonomia încă lipsesc în cea mai mare parte a studiilor de tip antropologic și arheologic asupra societăților trecute și prezente.

This paper is one of the first materializations of a topic that I became interested in during my formation as an archaeologist in my natal Romania in the late 90s and then as a student in the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City, an institution well-known in Latin America as the best in anthropological and archaeological domains and as leader in social investigations.

Proxemics is a relatively new word in the world of social studies; it probably does not designate a clearly defined discipline, but surely an interdisciplinary path of investigation with evident innovatory and daring merits. The term itself as well as the initial impulse for this kind of studies are own to an anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, whose famous book *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) came onto the scenario of our discipline as a synthesis of the ideas the author had been developing since the 50s (see Hall 1955, 1959). This book founded theoretically (and in a lesser manner, methodologically) a new approach to the socio-spatial studies.

Hall (1966:1) defines proxemics as the interrelated observations and theories on the human use of the space, understood as a specialized elaboration of culture. In other words, proxemics refers to the study of the relationships between man and the spatial dimension of his environment, but also to the human behavioral pattern inside the spatial mould.

At the base of the proxemic studies stood the principle that, together with time and matter, the space itself has always been an inseparable motif of the human existence, something that frames any aspect of life, something relating to everything (Ibidem; Watson 1972: 1). An argument built on an evident reality. Since the very commence of his mentioned book, E. T. Hall emphasizes that his studies deal with the way people manage space, between themselves and the others, as well as the space people build around in towns, cities, villages, in homes and offices.

As said earlier, proxemics is a science, a discipline or an interdisciplinary approach which can be used in the field of anthropology, psychology, architecture, city planning and – why not? – the archaeological investigations, at least as an assumed factor in the explanation or interpretation of the spatial dimension of the archaeological record. Anyway, proxemics qualifies among the social science disciplines. Its object of study, as well as in the case of all the other social sciences, is the human being in the middle of social interactions and processes. Simply the object of observation – that is the kind of data in use and the methodology it employs – marks the difference. That is the way Felipe Bate (1998) used to clarify the difference between archaeology and the other social sciences. However, as we will see it further on, proxemics needs to adjust its conceptual frame and to wide its social observational horizon in order to become a legitimate member of the social sciences.

I am not attempting to insist on the complexity of details and problems proxemics deals with, because there are plenty of papers about it (Hall 1955, 1959, 1966, 1968; Sommer 1969; Esser 1971; Watson 1972). The main guide on the topic is Hall's book of 1966 and that is why I will base my discussion on this author and take into account the essential aspects of his theory, according to the needs of the polemic I intent to develop.

I suppose it should be appropriate to expose the reasons that determined me to commence an introductory theoretical study on proxemics.

First, because I consider the discipline of proxemics includes a high analytical potential. I mean it offers the scholars a poorly explored approach that allows adding new variables to the analysis and explanation of social processes, and it can be managed by any of the social sciences. Obviously, such a task involves a few risks related to the applicability of the proxemics to the field of specific sciences. That urges the discipline to adjust its concepts and theories to the particular requirements of each science.

Secondly, this topic has a lot to do with the problematic of space seen as a social space, as I recently tried to define it (Ardelean 2003; 2004). I believe that proxemics should act as an auxiliary in the study and conceptualization of the social space and that the exploration of the analytical potential of such approach must become a valuable and obligatory practice.

In the third place, I am sure that proxemics needs to be assumed by the social scientists, as a key factor in the conformation of the human behavioral and interaction patterns and it must reside in our cognitive mechanisms when we confront to different cultural environments.

My approximation to anthropological proxemics tries to achieve at least three goals.

The first one is to analyze the actual state of the “classic” proxemics, the “hallian” one, and identify its weak points in order to find the elements that need correction, adjustment, so we can employ the proxemic theory and methodology in the general milieu of the social sciences. The second goal is to fit the conceptual frame of proxemics into the theoretical structure I manage in order to maintain an internal coherency of my theoretical and methodological proposal. The third goal is to find out how widely we can use proxemics in the archaeological investigations on past societies, trying to draw a few archaeological indicators for this kind of inferences. Aside this third objective, I will intent to present, although still in a very immature shape, the “palaeoproxemic” approach in archaeology.

I suspect there is another problematic aspect of the proxemic approach and we could consider it as a fourth goal, a “transversal” one. That is, we must ask ourselves which the real paper of the proxemic patterns is in the conformation and internal articulation of social processes and social space, how much these patterns are causes and how much they are effects, all this in order to avoid a “monopoly” or an *a priori* primacy of the proxemic factor in our social analyzes.

II

The “classic” proxemics, as developed by Hall, Sommer and others, does not hide its origins in biological sciences. In biology there is a discipline called *ethology*, intimately related to zoology and animal psychology. This discipline imposed itself by promoting the study of the “hidden dimension” of the animal life, just like its anthropological counterpart: the behavior of the individuals between each other and inside the groups, the space they keep between them in determined situations, the relationships between individuals in situations of stress and so.

Several times, Hall (1966: 19, 23) reminds ethology studies as Christiansen’s about deer in the James Island in the 50’s as well as Calhoun’s work on rats in the same epoch. The first case was a study developed on a population of deer living freely on an island but in extreme conditions of crowding. The investigation focused specifically on testing the malthusserian theory about the supposed directly proportional relationship between the population density and food resources. Christiansen observed the behavior of the animals when the balance of their environment was modified by introducing stress factors and that revealed new behavioral aspects that had to do precisely with the proxemic patterns of that specific population of deer. In the second case, Calhoun studied the white rats in a controlled artificial environment that allowed the scholar to experiment by modifying the space structure of the setting in order to input stress factors whose effect resulted to be the alteration of the proxemic relationships previously established between individuals.

In the theoretical-methodological frame of ethology, there is a series of central concepts as space, spatiality, distance, contact, territoriality, aggressiveness, and defense. That is, the most part of the conceptual tools of the discipline builds on the fundamental ideas of space and distance.

According to ethological criteria, animal species split into contact and non-contact ones. In the first category, we have for instance animals like walruses, imperial penguins and pigs, whose individuals adapted to live in conditions of physical contact among each other. In the second unit, there are species like some birds (swans, for example) whose individuals do not accustom to touch each other in normal conditions of life and prefer to keep a regular distance between.

The so-called *spacing mechanisms* play a key role in ethology studies and they systematize the animal behavioral patterns when making contact with individuals of its own species or with individuals of different species. For the first case (same species), the discipline manages two basic levels of distance. One is the *personal distance* – a term that Hall (idem: 13) takes from Hediger – referring to the distance that individuals of a same species (mainly a non-contact species) keep between them and could define as “an invisible bubble that surrounds the organism”. The other level is the *social distance* whose main function is to conserve the inner cohesion of the animal group and refers to the maximum physical distance an individual can hold to his

own group without losing confidence and security. These two levels of distance used while analyzing a specific segment of a single species play a very important role when talking about the conformation of the distance levels manifested in situations of contact between different species.

First, there is a *flight-distance* (a distance of retirement): it is the distance an animal allows an individual from a different potentially dangerous species to approach before flying or running. For example, the antelope's flight-distance refers to the approaching distance allowed to a potential predator before running away. This distance level is fundamentally built on the personal distance but in this case, the "bubble" is clearly bigger and also the function is not only to maintain a proper space among individuals, but also to protect life.

Secondly, we have the *critical distance*. This critical distance (or critical zone) always manifests when a flight reaction occurs (based on the violation of the borders of the previously mentioned level) and draws the narrow zone separating the flight distance from the attack distance (idem: 12). It means that the critical distance marks the maximum approaching space between two individuals of different species before one of them decides to attack. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that this distance level does not resumes to the relationships between predators and pray but to relationships between individuals of the same species, especially thinking in territorial conflicts between males. Therefore, we can notice that ethological levels are analytical levels maintaining close functional and causal relationships.

Territoriality is a basic concept in ethology, placed in the confluence of the above-mentioned distance levels and on the same position as their causal factors. Highly emphasized by ethologists, this theoretical tool projects the concept of aggressiveness into a privileged status. Hall – citing K. Lorenz – assumes the ethological conclusion that aggression is a necessary ingredient of the existence and, without it, the life, as we know it, would probably be impossible. We could also mention other kind of distance levels that Sommer (1969: 35) takes from ornithological studies. These levels have to do with behavioral situations when a new individual is added to a determined group of animals (birds, in this case) belonging to a non-contact species, and that causes a rearrangement of personal distances of the group's members. There are three distance levels in this domain: the arrival distance (induced by the newly arrived individual); the new distance resulted from the adjustment of the previously established pattern; and finally, the post-leaving distance, effect of a new readjustment of the distances when the intruder is gone.

It would be better to stop here with ethology. We can conclude, among other ideas, that ethology studies the animal behavioral patterns inside the double-direction relationship individual-individual and individual-group developed in a spatial frame, using the distance as the main analytical unit. The basic variability of ethology is the behavior-distance equation, with a higher weight on individual rather than group patterns; it seems that the group behavior is simply assumed as the combination of individual actions. In other words, ethology studies the use of space by members of a specific species in order to satisfy the basic needs of life, following the patterns of behavior characteristic to their population.

I remind the reader that the reason to insist on ethology is that proxemics traces its origins back to this discipline. Hall himself, the initial mentor of proxemics, does not break clearly with the original science: he widely uses a variety of ethology and animal psychology works, he cites case studies and finally develops a proxemic analytical scheme based on the theoretical and methodological corpus inherited from those disciplines.

III

We can affirm, without falling into any serious mistake, that proxemics is a "humanization" of ethology, an adaptation of an established discipline to human behavior. Hall comprehends the human society as a biological organism: "humankind is first, last, and always a biological organism" (*op. cit.*: X). This way, the hallian proxemics stands very close to human ecology, a theory that considers human being as one more biological species in the animal reign and assumes that humankind works by the same rules as the rest of the animal world.

In theoretical and epistemological terms, human ecology is guilty of theoretical reductionism, because it practically suggests that human society is based on the same set of general laws and principles as any other biotical community and it supposedly can be studied following the same corpus of theories,

concepts and laws as in biology and ecology. This is the main error in Hallian proxemics and it gives the discipline a series of theoretical, methodological and ontological limitations. Due to his ontological position, Hall maintained a much too narrow relationship to ethology, causing a harsh difficulty for proxemics to stand as a viable option among social sciences.

The classic proxemics looks “glued” to individual level while the individual himself is understood mainly as a biological organism (and less a merely social one!), as a minimal unit of psychological analyses. Curiously, it pays too little attention to the social, interaction level. Just as in the case of ethology, superior analytical units are simply taken as particular accumulations of the members of lower levels.

In the Hallian proposition, there are mainly two types of “spaces”.

First, a group of surrounding spaces (I prefer to call them proxemic levels) defined by the human biological senses that we use to obtain information from the environment. Therefore, we have “spaces” defined by touch, temperature, hearing, vision and smell. Second, in a different scale, there are spaces based on the criteria of contact between individuals. In this case, the proxemic levels are named distances: the intimate, the personal, the social and the public distances.

By just looking over these levels, we can notice a strong emphasis on individuals as biological entities. Criticizing these aspects, I do not intend to minimize the relevance of the proxemic studies. The use of the individual as minimal analytical unit has its own important advantages and allows significant applications of proxemics in the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology and psychiatry. Instead, I try to suggest the adaptation of the proxemic analyses to group-based ontologies, that means ontologies in which the social groups have much more importance and causal relevance than the individuals have. For instance, the behavioral archaeology (*cf.* Schiffer) sustains that not only individuals show behavior patterns, but also the groups and civilizations. It is worth checking further if proxemics has viable application capabilities on social levels superior to individuals.

The usual proxemic vision on space relates somehow to the “perceptionist” vision adopted by Harvey (1979), for example. It means that man perceives and filters space through the physical senses and conscience; it comes to be a form of speech. Watson (1972) used to say that it would be necessary to assume a different conceptualization of space, a non-physical one; the main interest of proxemics supposedly gravitates around the symbolic, expressive, “subjective” aspects of space. Hall affirms, more than once, that space hides a language inside, and this language is as complex as the spoken one. This author remembers Boas and its theory about the structure of speech reflecting the structure of thought and suggests that the spatial language shows a specific mental structure. We could understand this as Hall’s certain preference to particularism.

If we adopted the realist and materialist ontology and the explanation as cognitive goal, it would mean that our studies look for describing and explaining (that is, exposing the causal structure of phenomena) the reality as it *is*, not as it *seems* to be.³ A “dense description” *à la Geertz* is not able to overpass the illusion and appearance and cannot penetrate by itself up to the interior mechanism of the social relationships that shape the social phenomena. Hallian proxemics is somehow agnostic and sensitivist. His repeated references to Bishop of Berkeley and the quotes from Kilpatrick leave no room for doubt: “(...) we can never be aware of the world as such, but only of the impingement of physical forces on the sensory receptors”. Watson (*op. cit.*: 7) considers: “In developing these sets of interaction distances, Hall was not primarily concerned with the actual physical distances used in various situations, but in the ways in which these distances are perceived and maintained by the use of various sensory inputs”. A phrase that could open a long and complex polemic.

Resuming, the hallian proxemics “understands” space as a form of speech, as an expression of mental structure; but before all, the space pictured by this discipline is a perceived, experimented, sensed space, a projection filtered through the sensors of the human biology. The Hall’s almost particularist position and his sensitivist epistemology imprint an inevitable hue of particularism to the discipline itself. However, something is clear, independent from Hall or anyone else, something that could cloud the scientist’s serenity: the proxemic patterns closely relate to culture and this is the real reason for which the proxemics comes to be clearly particularist.

³ Now I start to convince myself that, instead of insisting on the central epistemological idea of explanation, we should explore more the implications of the concept of interpretation, a more post-processual tendency in recent archaeology.

We cannot deny the fact that human strongly depends on his receptor organs: skin, eyes, ears, nose, and tongue. Equally, we cannot hide proxemics' preoccupation on elaborating laws and general principles. Apparently, that was the intention of such authors as Hall, Sommer, Watson and others. Obviously, they succeeded in elaborating useful theoretical and methodological schemes full of conceptual tools whose ambition of generality allows their application to a variety of particular cases under the supposition of maintaining a structural coherence of the analyses. Nevertheless, the already-mentioned epistemological principles seriously obstruct the application of the classical proxemics on fields where the goals are the explanation and/or the interpretation of social phenomena. That is why the proxemic conceptual frame scarcely overcomes the status of a classificatory scheme, a methodological but not explicative one. And also, that is why the hallian proxemics includes the risk of falling in idealism.

Hall believes that, in order to understand the humans, we need to comprehend the nature of the receptor systems and the way the information captured through them is modified by culture (*op. cit.*: 41). According to the general theory of proxemics, the human receptor organs can divide in two main categories; first, the distance receptors, designed to obtain information from certain distance from the body (eyes, ears, nose), and second, the immediate receptors which absorb the close information (skin, tongue). The spaces the proxemics build on this receptors work like the "bubbles" of the ethological spatial levels defining concentric zones from where the sensors collect information for the organism. In his capital book, Hall reserves more than thirty pages to these issues involving also in the functional mechanisms of the receptors (*idem*: 42-74).

The construction of this bubble-kind of sensitive scheme resulted inevitable if we take into account that the central hallian topic was the *perceived* space. In such a situation, it is impossible to discuss about social space in serious analytical terms and blocks the functionality of alternative schemes like mine, a Marxism-based one (cf. Ardelean 2001; 2000-2001; 2003; 2004). In that classic model, space is reduced to its common sense significance, as the distance between two points, without any conceptual implication that enable it to cover wider and more complex realities. I even consider inappropriate the use of term "space" to name the sensorial spheres around the human body.

In proxemics, the "feeling" of territoriality is a synthesis of a variety of sensorial data captured by the organism, configured and adapted to culture. People have sensorial aspects of his personality which can be inhibited and transformed during his development inside his environment. The sensation of space has a lot to do with the sensation humans have about themselves (Lara 1997: 303). One of the most relevant points in the classic proxemics is that about space language, the space seen as an expression of culture, of cultural "sensitive world".

Hall explains that people belonging to different cultures live in different sensorial worlds as well (*op. cit.*: 2). In this context, it becomes more clear the significance of the hallian sensorial space levels. Different capacities of sensorial perception adapted to specific ecological environments and the particularities of sensorial receptors molded by culture make some of the incoming information be filtered or rejected. Thus, the particularistic hue of Hallian proxemics concludes that sensitive experiences depend upon culture. A statement that surely stands not too far from reality. Still following Hall's arguments, human beings defer from other species by having developed *extensions* of his organism – author says – and these extensions allowed him to specialize and improve certain functions. We normally call this technology. But we can notice that in proxemics the emphasis falls on those tecnomorphic artifacts (in Binford's terms) that played a role in the improvement of body capabilities.

Concerning the dynamic relationship between man and environment (almost synonymous of space in most of the proxemic discourse), the position adopted insists on the creative and molding paper of our species. All men (humans) are builders, creators, molders, shapers of the environment: environment is us (Sommer 1969: 7). I agree Hall's opinion that man and environment mold and shape each other. Although, I would not declare this statement as a universal law nor as religiously adopted axiom. It is the same theory of the created space that we can recognize in the work of some authors inscribed in the stream of Iberic and Latin American *social archaeology* (see Criado 1991). Humans are able to create their world, to build their biotope, as ethologists would say. By forming his world, human being determines the kind of organism he would be. That means that by shaping the physical dimension of his world, man decisively influences onto the psychic sphere, onto the perception of space; in turn, this one affects the very creation of space in a continuous closed causal chain. This is the key of classic proxemics.

I consider important to borrow a whole phrase from Hall:

The architectural and the urban environment that people create are expressions of this filter-screening process. In fact, from these man-altered environments, it is possible to learn how different people use their senses. Experience, therefore, because it occurs in a setting that has been molded by man (*op. cit.*: 2).

The space language, written in architecture, in urban planning, in the urbanism, in the interior structure of buildings and in art itself, talks to us about the manner people perceive space, the manner they experiment it (*cf. Watson op. cit.*). This central proxemic idea contains some very important theoretical aspects that must be rescued in order to achieve the adaptation of this discipline to the field of archaeology.

The main objective of proxemics, as presented from the inside as a way to justify the discipline socially, is to adjust, to equilibrate the spatial and proxemic needs of people to the physical infrastructure of their environments. It also claims that the urban traces, the design of buildings, the physical spaces in the urban scenarios usually are not suitable for a comfortable and adequate living. Indeed, still twinkling and urgent issue today. Proxemics alerts that architects, designers, urbanists, decorators have not taken into account the most important variable of their products: the vision about space characteristic to every culture where they raised their artificial spaces; they have ignored the proxemic patterns.⁴ So, the proxemics started by justifying itself as a discipline focused on architecture and urbanism, decided to reintroduce the human factor among the variables to think about.

Therefore, in a close relationship to proxemics we encounter another recently born discipline: *ergonomy* or *ergonomics*. This is the practical and creative manifestation of proxemics, its role is to apply the proxemic theoretical advances into real life. Ergonomics deals with according the spaces and objects (in cities, on the streets, inside the buildings, across a room) to the specific morphological and physiological human needs, to the spatial needs and to the psychological and esthetical requirements of individuals as their customs, behaviors and culture demand. Manuel Castells (1980: 118), a great urban sociologist, wrote about it:

La relación entre un cierto tipo de hábitat y los modos específicos de comportamiento es un tema clásico de la sociología urbana. Es incluso en este nivel donde los “constructores” buscan encontrar una utilidad a la reflexión sociológica, tras fórmulas que permitan traducir volúmenes arquitectónicos o espacios urbanísticos en términos de sociabilidad. La manipulación de la vida social por el ordenamiento del marco es un sueño suficientemente ligado a los utopistas y a los tecnócratas como para suscitar una masa creciente de investigaciones que se proponen verificar una correlación, constatada empíricamente en otro contexto.⁵

Hall handles the concept of hidden zones referred to the administrative spaces. He studies the conditions of work in American bureaucratic offices in order to find out the amount of space a person requires for a comfortable working atmosphere. I will call these spatial needs as *proxemic requirements*. Therefore, he discovered that people needed certain space around them so they can stretch their bodies, reach some objects nearby, walk a bit if they are tired, walk in certain way inside through the room, etc. The author systematized these needs in a series of zones or proxemic sphere he called “hidden zones”.

⁴ This is a tremendous and generalized problem in present Mexico, where I live. In all cities and towns, huge corporations monopolize the land and construction markets imposing building and planning patterns that have absolutely nothing to do with traditions, comfort, spatial needs or even minimum of life dignity. And of course, completely unaware of proxemics... Their unique leading factor is money: small surfaces for each house (as small as only 90 square meters including yard!), cheap and bad quality materials and terribly high prices (houses – always made of concrete bricks, never of normal bricks or timber – are sold up to ten times the production cost!).

⁵ “The relationship between certain type of habitat and the specific modes of behavior is a classic issue in urban sociology. It is precisely on this level where the “builders” try to find a utility to the sociological reflection, and formulas to allow the transposition of architectural volumes or urban spaces in terms of sociability. The manipulation of social life by the order of the frame is a dream related to utopists and technocrats and it is unable to generate a mass of investigations channeled to verify a correlation empirically observed in a different context.” (Translation is mine.)

Hallian proxemics is communication-based and its analyzing units stand on successive degrees of bio-communicative involvement of human individual with the environment and other individuals. Watson (*op. cit.*: 3) employs Hall's words to point that: "(...) the study of ways in which man gains knowledge of the content of other men's minds through judgement of behavior patterns associated with varying degrees of proximity". In above pages we have seen the structure of hallian proxemic levels built upon the concentric communicative spheres defined by the sensorial organs. Another scheme, although apparently different, follows exactly the same principles. The first scheme deals with the bio-communicative interaction between individuals and environment, while the second one emphasizes the relationship between individual and individual.

Hall (1966: 115) thinks that the human perception of space closely relates to action, it means it cannot be seen as a passive or abstract perception. The second scheme of proxemic levels contains four "distances": the intimate, the personal, the social and the public distance, each one presenting two internal phases, the close and the distant one.⁶ Once again, these are a sort of "bubbles" defining degrees of involvement in individual-to-individual contacts.

I believe that one of the major mistakes in classic proxemics was to ignore the importance of the social groups as basic analytical and observational units, as well as using instead simply clusters and sums of individuals whose conformations do not base on any socially significant criteria but bare casualty. By quickly reading the definitions of the above-mentioned four distances, it is obvious that sensorial organs play a major role again.

Sommer decided to employ a dichotomic system of classification for the space spheres of human interaction, getting a "proximate environment" and a "macro environment". The first one covers everything present to a person in a specific moment, while the second one refers to everything being out of the proximity of the person. In addition, inside the "proximate environment" a subdivision is suitable: an immediate and a far space. The first one is called "personal space" and I think it could easily correspond to the intimate and the first phase of the personal Hallian spaces (*cf.* Sommer 1969; Watson *op. cit.*). Sommer's model follows the general lines of hallian proxemics and centers on the individual, but his proposal is still more appropriate for at least one reason. It marks a certain distance from the idealism and shows more affinity to realism, because the use of a "macro" level of space means the recognition of the objective existence of superior and higher levels of space, which are independent from the cognoscitive, and sensorial capacities of the human organism.

Inspired by the models of Hall and Sommer, Watson (*op. cit.*: 3-7) sets forth another theoretical proposition made of three levels. Hall and Sommer models are expansive or progressive, because they start from small, reduced levels (the organism) and reach later to wider dimensions (the macro environment or the public distance). Meanwhile, the Watson model is regressive. In the first place, there is the macrospace, a superior level, referring to "great quantities of space". It includes the setting of buildings and streets of a settlement and the way people relate to the elements of the extra-urban landscape. This one is a lesser, less general and more specific level than Sommer's macro environment. The second category, the mesospace, contains the "structural arrangements inside the structural units and the mobile elements inside these units". The third one, the microspace – a frequently used term in proxemics – looks pretty much like Sommer's proximate environment and it refers explicitly to the physical interactions between people and the communication resulted from it. The Watson model has some characteristics that give it some advantages over the hallian one: it develops not on the sensorial criteria, but on the spatial manifestation of the proxemic behavior. Anyway, Watson seems to get close to a third model of Hall, which includes categories defined by the physical dimension of space.

IV

So far, a discussion and some theoretical developments are required.

Hall, especially, and other scholars dedicated to proxemics, generally, have used in several occasions the term *proxemic patterns*. But this term has not received a proper definition that allow it clear

⁶ I insist that the term "proxemic levels" is here used by me as a term of my own, and I have not found it explicitly in Hall's work.

its conceptual frame, so it cannot be clearly differentiated from some other theoretical instruments as “proxemic behavior” or “behavioral patterns”. The proxemic studies have just adopted the term as an established one.

We could probably get close enough to its meaning through a phrase earlier quoted: *behavior patterns associated with varying degrees of proximity*.⁷ Although this definition corresponds in certain way to the conceptual cover of the term and although it has to do with behavioral patterns and customs and to the factor of proximity, it still stands as an incomplete definition. It is incomplete and loose because it does not support sufficient criteria and variables in order to defend the proxemic patterns as distinct from some other similar ontological entities. The concept of “proxemic patterns” has to be defined in a level of generality so it can become useful as a theoretical tool in social studies. Nevertheless, the concrete use of the concept necessarily needs management on a level of particularity in order to mark and classify specific behaviors on the singularity level of culture.

I suggest the following definition of *proxemic patterns: the synthesis of probable and relatively predictable behaviors and attitudes of the members of a socio-cultural unit in particular contexts and specific circumstances of the human-space interface*.

This is supposed to be the general definition of proxemic patterns. In order to employ the concept in actual studies of man environments, we need to separate the content of the definition and reduce its degree of generality by identifying concepts that would enable us to apply it on the particular and singular levels of the reality.

The definition talks about a “synthesis of probable and predictable behaviors and attitudes”. The “synthesis” is own to the character of generality of the patterns we are talking about and it channels to integrate the proxemic behaviors, customs and attitudes synthetically, selectively and representatively in a suggestive unity. I assume that the proxemic patterns sit on a more general and hierarchically higher level than proxemic *behaviors*, standing as a representative and selective manifestation of these last ones. By “probable and relatively predictable”, I mean that the proxemic patterns are supposed to manifest as such in a variety of situations, they should be predicted and expected for; we could expect that a proxemic pattern should manifest in a more or less determined way in every situation.

The proxemic patterns depend upon and are shaped by the culture. As widely mentioned above, proxemic discipline characterizes by certain hue of particularism. Many times this attribute does not allow the discipline to develop general principles and laws. However, we must always remember that it is highly difficult to construct and maintain such general principles and laws in social sciences, simply because our observational universe, the humankind through time and space, is much too complex, rich, and diverse, much more than the physical worlds of the “exact sciences”. Anyway, the cultural factor stands as one of the most important causal elements in the conformation of the proxemic patterns. Quoting Hall (idem: 116): “Negroes and Spanish Americans as well as persons who come from southern European cultures have very different proxemic patterns”.⁸ Then, “in particular contexts and specific circumstances”, a Romanian, a Mexican, a Chinese would all behave in different ways according to the proxemic patterns of each one. A reality that has always been in front of our eyes and still so poorly represented in the anthropological and archaeological studies.

The reader would also notice that in my definition I use the expression “members of a social-cultural unit”. I have chosen this formula in order to keep congruence with the tone of generality of the definition, a tone channeled to a better application of the concept in a variety of particular contexts. Usually, the degree of generality of such a concept as the proxemic patterns associates with wider analytical units like ethnic groups and nations. Hall himself adopts this posture because we notice that to the end of his “Hidden Dimension” he presents comparisons between spatial behaviors of Americans, Arabians, French, English, Japanese, etc. It even seems that the ethnic criteria would be the unique for such comparisons. Later on, I will try to propose a wider optic about proxemics, in which the analytical units do not limit to the level of the individuals and the social, religious or political criteria could replace the ethnical one in the milieu of spatial customs.

⁷ Italics are mine.

⁸ Let’s forgive Hall’s reference to “negroes”, a “usual” word in the sixties.

In addition, I believe it is necessary to beware of the tendency of imposing an absolute systemic vision over the proxemic patterns, behaviors and reactions. The “absolute systemic vision” is when there is an a priori imposition of the characteristics of the whole on the constituent parts. In simpler words: a certain person of German origin is supposed to act in a determined way in a specific situation just because he/she belongs to a social unit (an ethnic group) that is believed to have a certain kind of proxemic behavior or proxemic patterns. This is not always the case, because there are many other different cultural factors (proceeding from many different levels of a culture and a very complex cultural background of the individual) that could modify the expected proxemic reaction of one person. Such an automatic vision exists because there is certain deliberate ignorance about a plurality of causal factors at the base of the conformation of proxemic patterns. That is why I wrote that the proxemic patterns express *probable* and *relatively predictable* (that is, not absolute and definitive) behaviors and there is room for a variety of “atypical” elements.

The formula “human-space interface” could stand for itself without more explanations. However, we could insist briefly on the “particular contexts and the specific circumstances”. By “particular contexts”, I understand the level of particularity of the generality defined as the human-space interface. These particular contexts also lead to the conformation of an internal taxonomy of the proxemic patterns: every particular context corresponds to a proxemic subtype whose finality is to synthesize the proxemic behaviors and attitudes manifested in these frames of particularity.

The proxemic contexts group into two major categories: the first category defines the simple relationship between man and space, while the second one is more complex, it is the relationship man-man-space (the space-related contacts between human beings). In this point of the discussion, I would stress an important detail: in the model that I am trying to develop along these pages, by the words “man” and “human”, I mean more than an individual or a specific person. I use these words with a wider meaning, referring also to social groups.

In the first category mentioned above, there are three types of contexts corresponding to three subtypes of proxemic patterns: a) the relationship between man and natural environment; b) the relationship between man and the external anthropic (artificial) environment; c) the relationship between man and the internal anthropic (artificial) environment.⁹ In the second category, we actually have the very same taxonomy like in the first category, excepting that there is an additional human element. In the first, we talked about the relationship between man and the components of natural and artificial environments. In the second one, we are dealing with the relationship between people (between various persons) on the scenario of those environments.

The particular context of the relationship between man and natural environment can reflect in the actual case of a person in front of a landscape (in passive or active attitude toward a landscape). From the point of view of the other category of particular contexts, we would imagine the case of the interaction of different persons or groups or social groups (that is, at least two human counterparts) inside a natural environment. The external anthropic environment (referred to in the second subtype or sub-pattern) speaks about the wide spatial arrangement of the human settlements, the disposition of buildings, streets, the general settlement pattern and it generally corresponds to Watson’s macrospace and even to Trigger’s third analytical level of settlement pattern archaeology (Trigger 1968; *cf.* Ardelean 2004). The internal (interior) anthropic environment defines the conformation of the inside of the spatial structures, the rooms, the halls, the setting of furniture and architectonic volumes, etc. This concept is close to above-mentioned Watson’s mesospace or microspace. However, it is less clear if it corresponds directly to one of Trigger levels.

Going back to the definition of proxemic patterns, the idea of “specific circumstances” reduces even more the degree of generality of the proxemic patterns and helps us focus our analysis closer on the observable reality. It is a more specific, more concrete level. These “circumstances” are hierarchically less than the particular contexts themselves, so that on the level of each particular context we can observe a variety of specific circumstances.

⁹ The terms “internal” and “external” refer to actual interior and exterior artificial spaces, that are the interior of buildings or the exterior features like plazas, streets, parks, the arrangement of the architectural units over the landscape, etc.

In the case of the context of the man-to-natural environment relationship and its corresponding proxemic sub-pattern, the specific circumstances would stipulate what kind of environment it is, if it's desert, rainforest, plain, in which conditions the interaction occurs, if "man" is a person or a group, the gender, etc. Concerning the proxemic sub-pattern of the relationship between man and the external anthropic environment, the possibilities offered by the specific circumstances are very complex and they can divide into two categories. In the first of them, we meet those circumstances which conform the base of the proxemic contact between man and space: the behavior and reaction of humans in front of a determined urban or rural settlement pattern (if it's dense or disperse, for example), facing narrow or wide streets, tall or small buildings, a crowded or spaced city, etc. In the second category, we can place the specific circumstances that regulate an active behavior of an ergonomic kind, the action of planning an urban space, etc. We could treat the same way the specific circumstances of the other types of particular contexts.

Although I do not express it clearly in my definition of the proxemic patterns, I dare to launch a new proxemic concept, inferior to the specific circumstances: the *singular situations*. This concept is the nearest to the observational reality and it frames the very concrete proxemic situations, projecting the generalized conceptualization of the proxemic patterns down to the singularity level. On the level of the singular situations, we could identify details and describe all the human and spatial elements involved.

We saw earlier that the specific circumstances are corresponded by the *proxemic behavior*. In the case of singular situations, we relate them to the *proxemic reactions*. As a definition: the proxemic behavior is the synthesis – at the height of the specific circumstances – of the proxemic reactions manifested in the frame of the singular situations. The proxemic sub-patterns represent a synthetic and suggestive integration of proxemic behaviors; finally, the proxemic patterns form the synthesis of the sub-patterns.

This way, we can observe the conformation of a hierarchical scheme of proxemic categories and concepts, which allows the evolution of the studies from a vague level of generality up to a level of singularity and conversely, and which intends to facilitate the integration of the observational dimension of reality into a theoretical-methodological, covering and flexible model.

The definition I proposed above referred to "proxemic behaviors and attitudes" and I will try to explain the difference. The proxemic behaviors are of "active" nature, they involve a dynamic action, a movement and visible proxemic reactions. The attitudes are less dynamic; they do not necessarily involve active reactions, rather psychological and emotional manifestations. The proxemic attitudes can act as antecedents or necessary conditions for the proxemic reactions and behaviors; they are their previous level, their starting point.

In general, the proxemic studies make a stand on the narrow relationship between proxemic patterns and culture, on the determination of cultural factors on those patterns. I generally agree this implicit statement and I could consider culture as the main mould to shape the proxemics. Nevertheless, it is urgent to clarify that the manifestation and the dynamics of the proxemic patterns are, actually, inter and trans-cultural. *Intercultural*, because the proxemic patterns of a culture acquire proxemic behaviors, attitudes and reactions of other cultures through processes of communication and contact between them. On the other hand, the specific circumstances and the singular situations can be natural, human and anthropic elements belonging to distinct cultural or geo-cultural areas, and that affects the expected and predicted manifestation of the sub-patterns, behaviors and so, giving them a heterogeneous and intercultural character. *Trans-cultural*, because the same proxemic sub-patterns, behaviors, attitudes and reactions are identifiable in different cultural ambits and that may cause similarity of the resulting proxemic patterns. A necessary condition for the trans-cultural proxemics is sharing specific circumstances and singular situations, a common reality of the globalizing modern world.

Another new concept useful to the proxemic analyses of the society is the *proxemic needs* or *proxemic requirements*. This concept – an its ontological referent – must be taken into account especially when dealing with the practical, ergonomic application of the proxemic discipline; but of course, it has to be employed also for the study of the components of proxemic patterns, especially in the heterogeneous and intercultural contexts of contemporaneous world. The proxemic requirements refer to those exigencies and needs of spatial and/or psychological sort that a person or a group manifest in order to balance, to equilibrate the particularities of the proxemic pattern they belong to and the natural, human and anthropic components of the specific circumstances and singular situations they confront with. The "hidden zones" mentioned by Hall qualify as a particular shape of proxemic requirements.

For example, let us imagine a shepherd from the Romanian Carpathians roaming for the first time in the streets of New York or Mexico City. He probably comes from a village characterized by disperse spatial pattern, with hundreds of meters between houses, with reduced visual contact between the households, with a grown human individualism, and with wide visual angles opening to the polychromatic richness of the landscape. All that played a role as causal factor in the conformation of a proxemic pattern different from what we expect to find in the immensity of the American or Mexican metropolis. In these urban environments, the Carpathian peasant would probably feel anguished, crushed by the narrow spaces, the closed angles, by the frequent unidirectionality of the lines of movement, by the ocean of people and perhaps he would desire to replace the noise of the city with the harmonic sounds of nature, etc. All those needs that person might have in order to feel fine in those new habitats represent proxemic requirements.

It is important to consider two essential – and apparently antagonist – aspects of proxemics: heterogeneity and homogeneity. The aspect of heterogeneity relates to the internally diverse, multicultural or intercultural character of a specific human society and of the corresponding proxemic patterns. The mobility and the growing communicating capacity typical for the human communities caused – in present and past times – a marked ethnical and cultural mixture that led to the formation of linguistic, cultural, behavioral mosaics. That is, a heterogeneity of the proxemic patterns.

In different areas, in different towns and cities of the world, people coming from very distinct traditions try to conserve their original proxemic patterns, sub-patterns or behaviors. In most cases, these people must adapt to the spatial conformation and the proxemics of their new city or their new country, although they intent to maintain, at the level of their proxemic attitudes, reactions and requirements, a strong bond with their original characteristics. In certain cases, specific aspects of the original proxemic patterns of the minority groups may become a manifest of the perpetuation of the identity and goals.

Hall and Sommer often refer to great variety that characterizes the “hidden dimension” of man and which manifests, at the particular level of a given society, as an internal heterogeneity of the proxemic patterns. If, as Hall points out, the main objective of proxemics, in general, and of ergonomics, in particular, is to raise the level of knowledge and self-knowledge, to reduce alienation, to help people communicate better and live in space according to their spatial requirements, then the relevance of the heterogeneity in proxemics is crucial. The architects should commence to project the buildings, offices, open spaces in congruence with the various and culturally distinct proxemic sub-patterns that integrate the proxemic patterns of a given location. Ergonomics anchored in the social reality and compromised to its goals would pronounce for an urbanism based on the respect for proxemic requirements and behavior of all inhabitants, manifesting in spaces able to adapt to or mould upon diversity.

Ignoring the proxemic heterogeneity of a social-spatial sample in the practice of ergonomics and in the use of proxemics in architectural and urbanistic projects normally leads to proxemic homogenization. Through an inductive inference, the observations made on the proxemic characteristics of the dominant group transform into generalizing conclusions about the entire community, so that the proxemic patterns and needs of the minorities would not find any representation in the physical-produced dimension of the space.

The proxemic homogenization has four classes of causes. First, the non-differential treatment and the negation of the proxemic heterogeneity in human societies. Second, the functional factor, it means that the spatial forms created upon certain proxemic patterns prove more functional, more effective in the context of the social dynamics of the moment. Third, there is a sort of esthetic or fashion-like causality related to the globalizing or economic-cultural-political expansion processes. These types of causes can interconnect so the real cause becomes the synthesis of all. For example, imagine everyone wanting to live in Japanese-style houses; that would seriously affect the conformation of the proxemic patterns of local cultures. In addition, we can notice the proliferation of American-style houses in many parts of the world in parallel with the wide acceptance of proxemic and behavioral patterns of the same origin just because they might result more “modern” or “nicer”. Finally, the fourth cause is one of the most aggressive and even can stand as the most important of all, at least in our times: the financial or economic factor. This is a widely spread cause of the violent homogenization of the proxemic patterns in Mexico, for example. Great construction and real-estate companies hold the monopoly over everything that means construction, household, spaces, land, and so. Almost the unique criteria they employ in the construction of the houses is the production cost; they look for the lowest production cost and the highest profit. They

build extremely small houses (whose dimensions and internal arrangement has absolutely nothing to do with the local proxemic patterns, sub-patterns, requirements, etc.) and very low cost (because they use very bad materials) and sell them at hilariously high prices. All the houses look the same (Mexicans call them “ratoneras”, meaning something like nests of mice), they lack yards or gardens (sometimes they have a very small area for plants in front and a tiny yard on the rear), they have no protection against temperature oscillations, they have no heating system; basically, they have nothing that the local cultural tradition had been developing during the last centuries. Therefore, all the proxemic and spatial aspects of the society are ignored and reduced to a single variable: money.

The proxemic uniformization on macroregional or global level does not born only through the manipulation of the physical-produced dimension of space, but also through the manipulation of the social conscience and ideology. The intents of military or economical empires to impose their behavioral rules, their value systems or their “good manners” over the conquered populations have always been forms of proxemic homogenization. Concerning the ideological manipulation, the religions themselves have usually based their actions on politics of proxemic homogenization, as a *sine qua non* condition of their trans-cultural success. Being alike from the proxemic point of view was a first step toward being “the same”.

In order to explain not only the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the patterns, but the constitution, the functioning and the relevance of the proxemic behavior, it is necessary to discuss about its *causal factors*.

V

According to Hall (idem: 101), there are three manifestations of the proxemics: the infracultural, the precultural and the microcultural. The author explains that “infracultural” is a term that refers to behaviors played “on lower organizational levels that underlie culture”, it is the behavioral component anchored in the biological past of man. The “precultural” manifestation talks about the senses, about the biological base shared by all human beings, and which supports the cultural structures and significations. In third place, the “microcultural” represents the level on which the majority of the proxemic observations are actually made. Hall wrote: “If for example, civilized man continues to ignore the data obtained on the infracultural level about the consequences of crowding, he runs the risk of developing the equivalent of the behavioral sink, if indeed he has not already done so” (*Ibidem*).

From the point of view of the concepts, we can observe that Hall manages a sort of synonymy between culture and civilization, as evolutionary states opposed to an inferior human condition, the infraculture. But it is also clear that Hall identifies at least two causal layers corresponding to infraculture and preculture, respectively. Although the author prefers to present them as “manifestations” of the proxemics, it is more useful to approach them as synthetic layers of causal factors. This way, the proxemics’ causal chain goes back to the “precultural” behavior and to the physiological background. Nevertheless, Hall’s interest in explanation remains superficial.

In his shallow approach to proxemic patterns, Hall offers much more importance to the non-cultural factors, especially to the “precultural” ones (that is, physiological ones): “It is this precultural sensory base to which the scientist must inevitably refer in comparing the proxemic patterns of Culture A with those of Culture B” (*Ibidem*). This epistemology is coherent to Hall’s vision in assuming space as a perceived one, a vision that starts from the idea that the proxemics’ inherent diversity rests on a variety of “sensorial worlds”. The contradiction inevitably comes out together with author’s effort to describe so different (American, Japanese, Arab, English, French, German...) and generally culturally determined proxemic patterns. Therefore, in my opinion, the distinctive causal factors are precisely cultural. The causal connection between these factors I will try to define and the resulting proxemic patterns is not unidirectional but reciprocal. The proxemics generates an adverse reaction that acts over the factors in a process of development, adjustment or adaptation, especially in circumstances of inter and trans-culturality. The same reciprocity is inevitable in case of the maintenance and reproduction of the proxemic patterns.

The factors sitting at the base of proxemics are of several categories: a) ecological; b) demographic; c) ideological; d) psychological; e) physical-anthropic; f) cultural.

Generally speaking, human societies developing in distinct ecological environments use to manifest different proxemic patterns. I am not proposing, under any circumstances, any kind of environmental determinism in proxemics. Actually, none of the above-mentioned categories of factors is able to impose as predominant. Nevertheless, at least in the configuration of the proxemic sub-pattern corresponding to the particular context of the man-environment interaction, the ecological factor is very important and almost decisive. Of course, minimizing my own statement, I should admit that this reality is applicable especially to traditional and past societies and less to modern ones.

In the second category, the demographic factors refer mainly to the size of the population and its density, which is one of the most important particular factors in the constitution of proxemic patterns, as my former example about the imaginary Carpathian shepherd could illustrate.

When I say density, I mean *real density*, the actual one, the objective one, the density one can notice in a given society through the various effects it has on the development of social practices. I do not mean the *statistical* density, the mathematical one, inscribed in the “calculist” scientificist methodology, which transforms the human society into a puzzle of numbers and fractions divorced from the reality itself. The distinction I make has to do with the epistemological distinction between objective and subjective reality. The first is the real reality (intentional redundancy), the reality a scientist is supposed to discover behind the appearance of the superficial image of the society. The subjective reality is the fake one, the discursive and ideological one, it is the reality exposed by the religions, by the official dogmas, by the dominant mentality. The parallel could probably result a little bit aggressive, but it is also true that, in many occasions, the social sciences (including anthropology and archaeology) are victims of the theoretical reductionism infiltrated by the “hard” or “exact” sciences. Returning to my argument, I would like to add that if we take a crowded city that imposes to humans to live in close contact between each other and, on the other side, a very disperse settlement pattern whose inhabitants scarcely interact, we get two models that are expressions of the real density and in each one of the two cases the divergent coefficients of density would seriously impact on the constitution of different proxemic patterns. The real density refers to the relationship between the number of individuals of the group and the physical-produced dimension of the corresponding socio-spatial level. In other words, it refers to the relationship between the size of population and the inhabitable surface of a settlement, nuanced through a variety of factors.

In order to obtain real density coefficients in the study of human societies of the past (here I point to archaeology), it is precise to employ demographic techniques able to reconstruct with minimum error the size of the population on a given time-and-space unit. For example, in the special case of archaeology, it is important to abandon the simplistic inferential thought that implies a directly proportional relationship between the surface (of the settlement or of a house) and the number of inhabitants. Unlike the real density, the statistical density manages mainly digits and less social data. It seems that this traditional statistical approach limits to only two variables: quantified space (square meters) and time (time units). It is very common to meet in archaeology simplistic conclusions about the demography (and, implicitly, the behavioral horizon of a past culture) based exclusively on the number and internal floor surface of the houses.

Continuing with the classification of causal factors, among the ideological factors we name norms, social and behavioral rules ideologically induced and mainly principles of religious nature. Religion has, in many contemporary cultures, a considerable and determinant impact on the proxemic behavior of groups and individuals. Certain elements related to social consciousness (or, in Marxist terms, to the inferior levels of the superstructure) act as decisive causal factors of proxemics.

Psychology defines another important category of causal factors and it represents an essential functional mechanism of proxemics (playing the role of fuel in the dynamic chain of proxemic attitude – proxemic reaction – proxemic behavior). The psychological factor can be considered as a synthetic product of the mutual interaction between the other types of factors and also as the link between those and proxemics. I mean psychology is like the vehicle that aids the other factors to impact on proxemics. In this psychological category, we can encounter a series of elements depending on the temperament and character of each individual, on his genetic and psychological inheritance and on the mental manipulation through ideological tools. Such delicate factors can be determinant in the conformation of singular proxemic behaviors that would not entirely respect the expected “formula” generated by the general proxemic pattern of the culture.

The category of physical-anthropoc factors refers to the concrete composition of the homonymous dimension of space. Such factors connect to the settlement pattern, the distance between buildings, the width of the streets, internal patterns of the buildings, particularities of the urbanism, the disposition of furniture and objects, the size of rooms, etc. I am taking into account the settlement pattern as one of the major indicators of the proxemic patterns, considering it as an effect of the last ones. Still, we have to consider the principle of reciprocal causality and conclude that settlement pattern and the rest of physical-produced (anthropic) manifestations are effects as well as causes of the proxemic behavior, and this ambivalence is a *sine qua non* condition for the maintenance and reproduction of proxemic patterns.

Castells emphasized the reciprocal relationship between spatial forms and proxemic behavior, particularly in urban habitats:

La relación, desde el punto de vista teórico, puede ser enfocada en los dos sentidos, porque la determinación de un comportamiento por un marco puede ser invertida a través de la influencia que las prácticas sociales puedan ejercer sobre la constitución de un espacio. [...] cada grupo social elige y produce un determinado espacio de acuerdo con su tipo de comportamiento (op. cit.: 119, 134).¹⁰

Finally, some of the factors I identify are cultural. The singular manifestations of any of the previously mentioned factors come to be cultural, too. In order to avoid confusions, I want to clarify that in the sixth category I try to place those factors that are exclusively cultural and cannot fit in any of the anterior categories. We could mention certain aspects of behavior, schemes of thinking, traditions originated in particular historical events, customs, norms. This kind of factors is necessarily exclusive to a given culture and they contribute to the specificity of the proxemic patterns of that culture. For instance, age and gender come to be relevant causal factors for proxemics and they manifest independently from the other categories. Actually, these factors are cultural ones, because they do not influence directly at the base of the constitution of the proxemic patterns, but according to their paper in the cultural “landscape” of each specific society.

The different types or categories of factors that I am raising here cannot be treated or valued separately, as none of them can impose as dominant over the others. In addition, as I specified in the case of the psychological factor, there is a close relationship between all these factors, some resulting from the interaction of others. The classification I set forth represent analytical categories, whose manifestation in the reality is synthetic and complex.

In conclusion, the proxemic patterns come to be a causal component of the internal structure of the dialectic of the space and one of the main sides of the social space and they are the effect of the interaction of a complexity of factors.

VI

Along my unexhaustive and brief analysis, I tried to resume the general issues of proxemics, its observational field as a social discipline, some limitations it implies and I suggested a few conceptual improvements.

After all that, as a logical necessity, I think it would be correct to investigate the proxemics' capability of tolerating a wider use, redefining somehow its goals and its observation objects, in order to adapt its employment inside the anthropological sciences. In order to achieve it, perhaps two action lines would be required: first, to adapt proxemics to a socio-spatial scheme that I developed recently (Ardelean 2001, 2003) and second, searching the way to set forth the palaeoproxemic approach in archaeology. Before entering the new discussion, I feel that one more look over the classic proxemics stays as necessary.

¹⁰ “The relationship, from a theoretical point of view, can be approached from both directions, because the determination of a behavior by a given frame can be reversed through the influence that the social practices can exert on the constitution of a space. (...) every social group chooses and produces a determined space according to his own kind of behavior.” (Translation is mine.)

In my opinion, the social space has two basic dimensions: the physical-natural and the physical-anthropropic, plus a physical *extension*, this one acting as the horizontal axis of space. Social space demands the integration of all dimensions in a whole unit. Hall (idem: 101-112) considers that proxemics, as a microcultural manifestation, presents three aspects: *fixed-feature space*, *semifixed-feature space*, and *informal space*.

The “fixed-feature space” means one of the basic modes of spatially organizing the activities of individuals and groups: “It includes material manifestations as well as the hidden, internalized designs that govern behavior as man moves about on this earth”. This first aspect refers mainly to the disposition of the buildings, the settlement pattern in anthropological terms, including the “countryside” and the “landscape”. Although he does not admit it openly, Hall considers that this “fixed-feature” thing is one of the main causal factors for the conformation of proxemic patterns, linked to the category of physical-anthropropic and ecological factors: “The important point about this fixed-feature space is that it is the mold into which a great deal of behavior is cast” (idem: 106). In the same context, the author quotes Sir Winston Churchill: “*We shape our buildings and they shape us*”.¹¹ These ideas are the fundamental points that classic proxemics provides to a possible palaeoproxemic approach.

The “semifixed-feature space” refers to interior design of buildings, especially to the arrangement of furniture and mobile objects. Hall bases on the work of physicians and psychologists like Humphrey Osmond and Robert Sommer who, through their studies of behavior in interior spaces (especially in hospitals) proved the clear relationship manifested between this semifixed-feature space and the human psychology and behavior. In the frame of such studies, two concepts emerge and Hall takes them for his own work; I think there are analytical units useful for the “classic-style” studies and also for the anthropological and archaeological employment of proxemics.

The mentioned concepts are the *sociofugal space* and *sociopetal space*. The first one manifests in those places whose spatial constitution keeps people separate, with low contact or none contacts between them. The second names spaces where, on the contrary (and especially due to the particularities of the semifixed-feature space), people live in situations of closer human contact.

Conserving my approbatory opinion about these concepts, I still have an objection. The sociofugal and sociopetal forms of space should not limit to the semifixed-feature spaces. First, because both of them acquire a marked causal imprint from the fixed-feature space. Second, because the two “antagonist” kinds of space can manifest not only in interiors, but also on wider levels, on the level of settlement pattern or even on the level of the physical-natural dimension of space. For example, a compact settlement pattern framing a high-density community can be a manifestation of the sociopetal space. On the contrary, a disperse pattern (and a low-density population), with buildings scattered over a great extension of land, would be a sociofugal space.

If we observe the physical-natural dimension of the space (easily included by Hall into the category of fixed-feature space), we can identify the same dichotomy. A large fertile plain potentially inhabited by different human communities or a plateau rich in resources can be manifestations of sociofugal space. A small island, an oasis in the desert, a narrow valley between high mountains (naturally circumscribed, as Carneiro would say) are examples of sociopetal space. In these cases, the difference between sociopetal and sociofugal born from the “threesome” relationship between the physical extension of space, available resources and demography. The competition for resources and the conflicts are more feasible in a sociopetal than in a sociofugal space. That is why we could agree Hall’s idea: “the sociofugal space is not necessarily bad, nor is sociopetal space universally good”.

The third aspect of the proxemics, according to Hall, is the informal or dynamic space, related again to the sphere of perception or spatial experience and it refers to the distances kept by individuals in their encounters.

The alternative scheme proposed by Watson, as already mentioned, starts from the previous models of Hall and Sommer. The fixed-feature space can be replaced by the macrospace, while the semifixed-feature space makes room for the mesospace. These spatial analytical units have almost the same conceptual content as the hallian ones, but the terminology itself suggests a better internal cohesion of the concepts. Watson’s third spatial unit is the microspace, generally similar to the informal or dynamic space in Hall.

¹¹ Italics are mine.

One of the main critics I already made on the limitations of traditional proxemics is its emphasis on individuals. I consider that this discipline, in order to work in the field of studies about human societies and the causal explanation/interpretation of their phenomena, needs to focus on analytical units more representative for the social dynamics. In the case of anthropological proxemics (and its application in archaeology), more accent on social groups is required. Lara (1997: 301), in the context of her discussion about the goals of proxemics, leaves room for this approach when saying that one of the goals is precisely analyzing the relationships between man and space on the level of the social units. As I stressed in other context (Ardelean 2001, 2003), there is an ontological difference between *group*, as a cluster of elements joined by a common criteria, and the *social group*, as an analytical unit relevant for the structural explanation of the social processes. We could talk about groups defined on various criteria: fans of a football team, an ethnic group, a group formed by the adepts of a musical style, of a scientific posture, of an artistic stream, etc. Some of them would be just “groups”, defined solely by the criteria that keep the members together. Other would be *social groups*, if they fit in a special place inside the mechanism of their society so that they can act and influence on the social dynamics.

Human groups manifest proxemic behavior. Group proxemics is different from the individual's proxemics, and it shows a particular internal complexity. It is impossible to analyze it exhaustively here, but some general lines can be drawn. First, it is inappropriate to think of group proxemics as a simple sum of the proxemic attitudes, reactions and behaviors of the integrant individuals. The individuals' behavior finally would manifest in the spatial language of the group. As a given group is a segment of a concrete human society, its proxemic behavior inscribes in the proxemic pattern of the culture to which belongs. But the variables that now play as relevant causal factors are different from those previously presented for the “normal” proxemic patterns. Nevertheless, the proxemics of human groups and social groups materializes through the behavior of individuals.

Group proxemics, in order to be observed and analyzed as such, needs to be framed by the scale marked by the defining criteria. One person may be a member of various groups, significant or not for the dynamics of social processes. This person is, at any time and independently from his/her membership to groups, an exponent of the specific proxemic pattern of his/her culture. Joining a group or a social group, the person would reach other proxemic levels. Standing on these new proxemic levels, our individual would add to his/her behavior the characteristics of the proxemics of each group he/she belongs to; and that does not succeed simultaneously, it depends on the moment of direct integration into one group, while the proxemic features typical of the other groups stay latent until the reintegration of the member to the activities of those groups.

The proxemic of a human group in general and of a social group in particular manifests inside the scale of groups. A scale is the unit marked by the theoretical link between groups defined by common criteria. If a scale is defined by the criteria of football affiliation, etc., and it is formed by the groups x, z, y, \dots, n , then the proxemic patterns of the group x crystallize in the frame of the interaction with the other groups that integrate the scale.

One of the basic causal factors of group proxemics is the group identity, the conscience of the self. According to this self-identity, the group shapes its possible proxemic reactions, attitudes and behaviors in its contact with other compatible groups, that is, from the same criteria-based scale. This kind of proxemics is supposed to respect the levels of generality of the pattern, the levels of particularity of the context, levels of specificity of the conditions and of singularity of the situations. An indispensable condition for the development of a group proxemic pattern is its own internal cohesion and coherence. The individuals that integrate the group should necessarily adopt the group identity and the elements of the group proxemic pattern in order to apply them during the contact situations with other groups.

A clarification is necessary. Group proxemics may manifest in three different forms. The first one results from the contact between two groups, with no need for the involvement of all the members. The second form manifests with contact between a group and an individual member of another group. The third form refers to the proxemic interaction between two individuals members of two different groups. In all three cases, we would expect to see the proxemic patterns manifesting coherently, although the singular proxemic reactions and the aspects of the behavior could differ in the three mentioned forms.

Another important causal factor of the proxemic group behavior is the defining criteria that found the scale. Related to this one, we could still mention other two factors: the intensity of the competition

between groups inside the scale and the kind of needs that people look for through their integration in a group. Always, the causal factors that act in the conformation of the settlement pattern of a specific culture will decisively affect the constitution of the proxemic patterns of the groups.

The relevance of group proxemics for the study of human societies is directly proportional with the relevance of the defining criteria of the scale for the dynamics and the explanation of the social processes.

The group proxemic patterns interact outward intraculturally, interculturally and transculturally.

Intraculturally, inside the society, the relationships occur between “protagonist” groups and groups that belong to other scales. In this case, the ideological, psychological, cultural factors and the values involved in the orientation of the proxemic reactions, attitudes and behaviors present certain modifications in their importance; it is a slightly different mechanism comparing to “normal” proxemics.

The intercultural interaction can occur between groups that belong to compatible scales (based on the same criteria) framed by different cultures and, on the other hand, between culturally distinct groups set on different scales. In the intercultural proxemic interactions, but also in case of intracultural inter-scale ones, the psychological, ideological and cultural factors acquire a higher causal importance than in the case of intra-scale / intracultural group proxemic relations.

The transcultural manifestation of group proxemic patterns occurs when the same proxemic pattern of a group belonging to a given scale situates in a similar case framed by a different culture.

I suggest the employment of a group scale formed by the production criteria, generating a series of *social determined groups* or *social productive groups* (SDG or SPG). Each one of these groups presents an internal structure of social analytical levels corresponding to socio-spatial analytical levels. Specific proxemic behaviors may correspond to the components of this socio-spatial scheme.

As an imposing parenthesis, I feel necessary to stress that, in an earlier work, I intended to define the concept and the corresponding ontological dimension of the social determined groups (Ardelean *op. cit.*). The SDG or SPG are socially significant groups defined through the criteria of production and they generate products required to satisfy the diverse necessities of a society. Inscribed in the scale defined by the production, their real criterion is the products they emanate. Production means a process, the dynamic integration of a series of integrant elements of the production forces and the social relationships of production. The products, on the other hand, are the goal of the productive process, the way to satisfy the needs that justify the production and represent, from the archaeological point of view, the main class of indicators useful for inferring real production processes. Their product thus defines this kind of social group. By product I do not only mean actual things, physical and mercantile things, but any kind of result generated by an organized human activity; we understand as products the services and different activities that result as products from a series of specific actions of a social group and which inscribe into the functional mechanism of a society as fulfillments of specific needs required by the very engines of that society. That *determines* the implication of humans, in an organized way, into productive processes channeled to satisfy such needs. Around these processes, a sum of social groups appears and their existence and cohesion are supported by the motivation to create a kind of goods (objects, services) which receive significance and relevance from the society. In this way, the social productive groups come to be *determined* social groups.

This is a good moment to define the concept of *proxemic levels*. Hall uses this term in order to refer to infra-, pre-, and microcultural manifestations of proxemics, a sort of synonym of that. I use the term to talk about the distinct degrees of progressive social integration and social complexity, which support the conditions for behaviors of proxemic nature. The proxemics of individuals, of groups, of social determined groups, they all represent different proxemic levels. Actually, the concept implies a wide tolerance and we can apply it to different components of the complex hierarchical structures that integrate the wider proxemic field.

The proxemics of social productive / determined groups manifests in two plans. First, inside the scale and refers to the relation between different such groups. Second, inside the internal structure of a given SDG; as earlier seen, distinct socio-spatial analytical levels correspond to symmetrically arranged proxemic levels. The SDG proxemics belongs to the field of group proxemics and shares its general characteristics. The factor that marks the particularity of such patterns is the position of the social group in the socio-economical hierarchy. The causal factors of ideological, ecological, demographical, psychological, physical-produced and cultural types play a significant role in the formation of the

proxemic patterns of every social determined group. If in general terms proxemics means the relationship between people in a spatial frame, then its application to the ambit of social groups requires the involvement of the social space. The proxemic relationships between social determined groups articulate on the level of the physical-natural and physical-produced dimensions of the space. We can consider that there is a specific proxemic behavior that corresponds, respectively, to the individual, to the producer, to the productive agents and to the social determined groups and that forms hierarchically ordered levels closely linked to the functioning of the social structure.

We could think of an example, a potter, for instance. As individual human being, he has his own personal space, from socio-spatial and proxemic point of views. He belongs to a human society with a proxemic pattern that usually reflects into the proxemic behavior of its members. This man realizes activities inscribed in the productive processes of a series of socially significant goods: ceramics. That is why, from the perspective of the social dynamics, he is not just a man, but also a producer. With that, we already observe our man fitting a superior integration level corresponding to a particular space. He would never stop being a human being, so he will always keep his individual proxemic behavior, a lower projection of the proxemic pattern of his culture. Nevertheless, he is also a producer, the physical-natural and physical-anthropocentric dimensions of his particular space include environmental and artificial elements that do not necessarily fit in the dimensions of his personal space as simple individual. For that reason, his space perception amplifies and focuses more on the specific elements related to the proper functioning of his productive activities. As an individual, his proxemic reactions, attitudes and behaviors used to manifest in situations and contexts related to the sphere of his personal space: encounters with individuals and groups and variable distances, physical contacts, etc. But as a socially active producer, he involves a particular space whose core is formed by the means, the objects and the instruments of work. When somebody enters his workshop, uses or touches his instruments, the raw material, the potter will manifest determined proxemic reactions, attitudes and behaviors that are normal for the producer-man, not for the simple man.

The potter of this ideal case is part of a society that probably recognizes the family (not the individual) as a productive agent. In my opinion, a productive agent, as a social category, includes not only the active producer-person, but also the “passive” individuals, I mean individuals not actively in productive activities and processes. This way the potter stands on a higher socially integrative level related to what I call the *inscribed space*, with its own proxemic level. For instance, the members of his family, although not directly involved in the production, could be the only ones allowed to be in contact with the concrete components of the productive forces and act proxemically in specific ways if someone else approaches the workshop and so on.

The proxemics of the social determined group of the potters in a given society form through the combination of the proxemic behaviors manifested in lower socio-spatial levels. The proxemic pattern of a social determined group regularizes the access of external individuals and groups to the components of its *adscribed space* (this is a theoretical concept referring to the segment of social space that a society gives to a social determined group in order to achieve its social missions).

Our theoretical discussion about group proxemics can go on and develop still further together with more analytical aspects of this problem. Anyway, in order to conclude, I will resume the factors involved in the constitution of the proxemic patterns of social determined groups. They are: the categories of causal factors of the general proxemics mentioned in upper pages; the group identity; the class of products they generate; the position of the group in the socio-economical hierarchy; aspects of socio-political organization and, although not fully treated, the system of property relationships. This last one is a factor that may regulate the proxemic behavior of the group inward and outward the scale, intra and interculturally. Hall talks about his proxemic model in terms of “anthropology of space” (idem: 101). Proxemics can be managed as a high potential instrument in the anthropological studies, as it is a discipline (or at least an approach) that introduces a fundamental variable in the articulation of causal factors of the social dynamics. In order to improve that, we need to develop theoretical works and empirical studies focused on proxemics based on social groups, not only on individuals.

VII

Related to my intentions to promote the employment of proxemics in the field of anthropological and archaeological studies, I consider important to explore the possibilities of a *palaeoproxemic* approach.

This special branch of proxemics is the study of the proxemic patterns of human communities and social groups in the past through the analyses of the archaeological record in order to amplify the capacity of our scientific explanations and interpretations; this approach would find use in the settlement archaeology. This has absolutely nothing to do with a sort of “psycho-archaeology”, although the psychological factor clearly plays a privileged role. It is rather about a theoretical and methodological adjustment of archaeology in order to recognize the importance of the proxemic behavior as an organic part of human reality and as relevant causal factor involved in the constitution of the physical-anthropoc dimension of the social space.

Hall himself tangentially employs a kind of palaeoproxemic approach, although he does not assume it as such. Fletcher (1977) recognizes the utility of proxemics in archaeology and its withstanding paper as causal factor of settlement patterns. Hall writes a whole chapter about art and architecture as indicators of the manner in which cultures perceive space (idem: 80-90). If the “language of space” comes to be as complex as the spoken one, then the architecture is a form of expression of that sort of language, the author suggests. A fragment of that chapter sounds clear enough:

For example, the early Egyptian experience of space was very different from our own. Their preoccupation apparently was more with the correct orientation and alignment of their religious and ceremonial structures in the cosmos than with enclosed space per se. The construction and the precise orientation of pyramids and temples on a north-south or east-west axis had magic implications designed to control the supernatural by symbolically reproducing it. The Egyptians had a great geometric interest in sight lines and plane surfaces. We also note in Egyptian murals and paintings that everything appear flat and the time is segmented. [...] The classical Greek developed real sophistication in the complete integration of line that has seldom been equaled... (p. 83).

We notice that, according to Hall, the type of information that the ancient architecture furnishes us relates again to the perception of space, to the spatial experimentation, to the tridimensional structure of lines, angles and volumes filtered through our sensorial experience and through the sensitive sieve of culture and further applied into practice according to the specific proxemic requirements. Hall’s repetitive dissertation about the “spatial experience” and its reflection into the world of arts remains limited to the frame of art criticism. The shape and articulation of architectural elements and their spatial arrangement are understood as expressive units of a language and less as indicators of social realities. The author is more interested in significances, in messages contained by the architecture manifested as a form of art. Hall avoids situating all the spatial levels in the frame of palaeoproxemics. He practically restrains to formal aspects of the microspace and mesospace (in Watson’s terms), but he keeps uncertain the relevance of macrospace for this kind of approach. The same author launches a criticism on the “presentism” manifested in the studies on the past of mankind: “The great criticism one can make of the many attempts to interpret man’s past is that they project onto the visual world of the past the structure of the visual world of the present” (idem: 81).

The aspect criticized here concerns a major epistemological and methodological problem manifested in the historical sciences in general and in archaeology in particular. This problem does not limit to proxemics but it touches the general ambit of inference. The use of elements that constitute the present reality in the reconstruction and explanation of the past reality manifests in two different, opposed senses: the abusive employment of the present as well as its complete denial have negative implications on the scientific investigation. The proper way to follow is the middle one. We live in the present and the only reality we know is the present one. The “presentism” is a considerable positive auxiliary for us if we understand and use it correctly: starting from the present as a reference point, as “raw material” of our working hypothesis that are to be confronted to the objective reality along the development of an investigation.

The kind of data archaeology uses in realizing inferences about the society reserves an extended place for the components of the physical-anthropoc dimension of the social space. That dimension has greater relevance and a bigger potential of information about palaeoproxemics than the physical-natural dimension. When talking about the factors involved in the formation of proxemic patterns, we saw that the physical-produced ones were among them. Concretely, this class of factors points to architectural structures, to units forming settlement patterns. There is a bidirectional causal relation between proxemics

and the physical-anthropoc dimension. It is an equation in which somehow proxemics influences the internal structure of space units and their disposition over the landscape; the other side of the equation acts back over the shape and content of the proxemic behavior, regularizing its manifestation and conditioning its reproduction. Without having to do with rigid interaction, the proxemic patterns can influence the settlement patterns and vice versa.

It is usually considered that the cognitive goal of science should be *explanation*, which means the identification and exhaustive analyses of causal relationships. The archaeologists studying the social processes through the observation of an articulation of data on the level of archaeological record are supposed to look for the causes hidden at the base of a certain type of settlement pattern. As a brief parenthesis about explanation, the postprocesual archaeology taught us that this is more an illusionary goal and that actually the *interpretation* is a more suitable and reachable goal for our discipline. It would be a clear error to believe that proxemics could stand as a singular causal factor for the settlement patterns, as it probably was the hidden intention behind the hallian theory of the spatial language. At least we can envision proxemics as a major factor in the spatial articulation of buildings and human settlements.

Theoretically, studying the settlement pattern, we could infer about the structure of the proxemic levels corresponding to the distinct socio-spatial levels, in order to maintain this way the coherence and internal cohesion of the analyses. The causal value of proxemic factors in settlement patterns is limited by a series of other causal factors: first, the property relationships; second, the local architectural and urban patterns; third, the superstructural order related to ideology, manipulated by upper classes and dominant groups.

All the proxemic levels find somehow their expression in the spatial structure and the formal aspects of the settlement pattern of a community. The effect of proxemics on the human settlement results from the combination of effects caused by the management of physical-produced dimension through the different proxemic levels, no matter if analytical levels included in the social determined group and the corresponding spatial level or levels of social groups of other kind. I prefer to enlighten the causal relevance of group proxemics. An important aspect worth studying in the future is how much the causal relevance of social determined groups imposes over the causal relevance of human groups in general.

The proxemics of individuals can be inferred through the study of the internal distribution of space in habitations, the relationship between activity areas and rest areas, the extension of the floors, the internal separation of structures, the proportion between the size of the buildings and the probable number of inhabitants, the width of walls, etc. The proxemics of producers and productive agents results more difficult because, although if we identified workshops, we would find it hard to relate them to individuals especially if they are some distance away from houses and other living areas.

Among the archaeological indicators of causal proxemic patterns printed on the shape of settlement patterns we could name: compact or disperse settlement patterns; density of buildings on space-time unit; clustering of buildings belonging to different social groups; differences in densities and clustering of buildings between different areas of the settlement; distances between buildings associated to different social groups; distances between buildings related to the spatial level of a single social group; distance and relation between buildings of the same functional class (habitation, administrative, religious, etc.); volume of the interior of structures; sociofugal or sociopetal character of the buildings or the units they belong to; presence or absence of patios and yards and their spatial relationships to architectural units; the internal divisions of the buildings, the size of the divisions, their shape, the width of internal and external walls; number, height and width of doorways; easiness or difficulty of access from the exterior; the number of persons theoretically able to occupy the space simultaneously; the arrangement of distinct functional areas; degree of visibility between neighbors; the delimitations of the land (features also related to property relationships and defense); the material used to build the delimitating features (loose stones, straw, timber, masonry); the presence or absence of external and perimeter walls; the degree of communicability between different spatial units and sectors; degree of visibility of the interior of the houses from the outside; the length and width of the streets; the linear or non-linear shape of the streets; how many people can walk side by side on a street or inside a building, etc, etc. Nevertheless, much of these factors may inform also about other aspects of the society. Moreover, it is still difficult to specify which archaeological indicator points to which particular aspects of the proxemic patterns and behaviors and I believe there is still a lot to do before arming a coherent middle-range theory able to link the theoretical corpus of proxemics and the physical manifestations of the archaeological record.

Palaeoproxemics could convert into a sort of parallel discipline or a particular approach inside archaeology. A correct vision about social reality would demand us to articulate proxemics and the other aspects of social dynamics in a whole. Perhaps, archaeologist's task would not be to reconstruct the proxemic behavior of past people, but to assume proxemics as a relevant causal factor in the explanation/interpretation of social phenomena and to study the degree of involvement of proxemics in the social dynamics and cultural manifestations. And yet, it is worth developing a deductive inferential scheme capable of allowing proxemics to occupy a durable place among social sciences.

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