

Models of human needs

There are many reasons why psychologists shy away from the investigation of human needs. Not the least of these is that given by Kurt Lewin. He noted that there are as many needs as there are specific and distinguishable cravings. There are, however, generalizations one can make about groups of needs—categorizations of needs—that can be used as the basis for defining a functional urban design.

A number of models of human needs have been examined by designers (e.g., Alexander 1969; P. Peterson 1969; Mikellides 1980b). There is considerable overlap among the models, but each emphasizes a different aspect of human life. Abraham Maslow's hierarchical model of needs, which is, perhaps, the dominant, all-inclusive model, is presented as a "theory of human motivations" (Maslow 1987). Alexander Leighton (1959) describes needs in terms of "essential striving sentiments." Erik Erikson (1950) analyzes individual identities at each stage in the human life cycle. Hadley Cantril (1965) also focuses on stages in the life cycle as a basic determinant of human needs. All of these psychologists bring important insights to the analysis of human behavior, but ultimately it is Maslow's model that holds up as the best comprehensive view. Indeed, in thinking about design issues, most city planners and architects who are concerned with a user needs approach to design have turned to some adaptation of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs.

In 1954 Abraham Maslow proposed a hypothetical model of human behavior in his book *Motivation and Personality*, which has been recently updated by his colleagues (Maslow 1987). His hierarchical "holistic-dynamic theory" draws on the earlier psychological work of John Dewey and Gestalt theory as well as on the psychoanalytical literature. Maslow identifies five sets of *basic needs* from the most fundamental to the most esoteric in a hierarchy of prepotency. "The most prepotent goal will monopolize consciousness . . . and when a need is fairly well satisfied, the next prepotent [higher] need emerges." His hierarchy of basic needs begins with physiological needs—the need for survival. These are followed by safety and security needs, affiliation needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Maslow also identified a second set of needs, *cognitive and aesthetic needs*, which guide and shape the processes of attaining the other needs but also have a character of their own.

An examination of individual lives indicates that not everybody, consciously or subconsciously, orders

the hierarchy in this way. In some instances people's behavior can still be explained in terms of the model, but in others the values they hold turn the model upside down. Some people hold beliefs that place other ends above the need for survival in the hierarchy. Many people have died for their beliefs. There are also people who seem to lead lives without the need for external approval and indeed thrive on censure. However, while they still perceive themselves as part of a class of people, this kind of life can hardly be ideal.

The consequences of looking at urban designers' tasks as the fulfillment of human needs in this way can only be illustrated by understanding the interrelationships among them. The interrelationships form a complex web that shows the futility of any simplistic model of the concerns of urban design (see Fig. 24.2). The full consequences of a functional urban design based on Maslow's model need to be developed in detail, but in order to understand the functions of cities, they need to be previewed here.

The basic human needs

Human needs are neither independent of each other nor mutually exclusive. They are, indeed, highly interdependent. Some needs have a biological basis, others are a product of the sociogenic environment, and many have a biological base that is very much culturally molded. Although the nature-nurture controversy is no longer at the center of psychological research, there are many processes that are still poorly understood. The rise of sociobiological research shows that many of the factors that we assumed were purely cultural may well have biological components at their basis after all (Wilson 1978). Suffice to say here that the prerequisite for the attainment of the full set of needs is having freedom of action within a moral order.

Physiological needs

The basic human need is for survival. To survive one needs life-sustaining inputs of oxygen, food, and water. One also needs to be able to sleep and to move around a territory to obtain the basic necessities of life. If the need for food, say, is unsatisfied, then all the capacities of a person are put into the service of hunger-satisfaction. The architectural need is for shelter from the extremes of heat and cold. Almost no urban design decisions are made only at this most basic level—they deal with higher-order needs that subsume the need for survival.