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A Narrative Manual Proposal for Design Process

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Abstract

Designing a space is an act of “daydreaming” realised by discovering the pattern between the existing knowledge, ideas, and intuitions about that place. The architectural design has multi-layered data structures consisting of programmatic-functional and experiential-emotional-social knowledge. This study considers that a substantial part of these data is related to the human experience and investigates “How can these data be included in the design process?” This research aims to evaluate “narrative” as an important design tool in conveying spatial experiences by emphasising the importance of human experience in the design process. Thus, its potential and structure are investigated.

Humans are active, emotional, social beings who interact with what they perceive; additionally, their past and environment heavily influence their construction of reality. With these characteristics, they should be evaluated as subjects who live in and reconstruct the environment through their actions. As a result, it is deemed valuable to include humans in the entire design process in its narrative context. In this context, the designer may become more aware of the living fragments of places and, thus, more creative.

In its various forms, narrative is a communication tool designed to convey experiences. This research is divided into three parts that address the why, which content and formation, and how of incorporating human narrative into the design process. The knowledge and potential thought generated by the narratives in the design process will be expanded. The second section will go over narrative content and actions. Finally, based on these expansions, definitions, and discussions, a “narrative manual” proposal will be developed to show how to create human narratives for use in the design process.

Keywords: architectural design process, alive fragments, spatial narrative, narration

1. Introduction

Architect as a designer, in the plane of endless possibilities he is in, postpones actions such as “dreaming about life” that will complicate the process. He evaluates it as a situation that should be avoided mostly. Moles (1990) explains it as a conscious laziness rejecting these facts when the capacity for precision, measurement, and conceptualisation is insufficient. And yet, while designing the space that will filter through the plane of endless possibilities, the architect discusses the design in terms of dehumanisation or space-user relationship. Till (2009, p.126) draws attention to the awareness of the human who will occupy the space and says “remember that users, you

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included, are more than abstractions or ideals; they are imperfect, multiple, political, and all the better for it.” While creating the representation of man in the design process, the fact that he is a moving and experiencing being should be a priority. This research investigates the reasons, ways, and potentials of including narrative in the design process.

A narrative can be defined as a communication tool that is created to convey experience, and it has many forms. Polkinghorne (1988) defines narrative as a whole scheme for linking individual human actions and events to the interrelated aspects of an intelligible composition. Branigan (1992) describes it as a perceptual activity that organises information/data and reflects and explains experiences in a particular model. In a context, while the narrative depends on the experience data and an extension of sensory knowledge, it is formed and shared with previous experiences and mental schemas. The question, “Why should narrative be included in the design process?” is derived from all these considerations. Besides, they are short answers to the question that will initiate a broader discussion.

It is predicted that by incorporating human narratives into the design process, processing them and re-imagining the space with them, making the parts of the designed space visible through certain intervals/ambiguities, and creating the place through the constantly formed / distorted coexistence of these moments will open up the creative possibilities in the process. While doing this, it aims to propose a guide that will enable the dismantling and examination of the fundamental components of the narrative and their inclusion in the design process.

2. Why Narrative?

The contribution of humans who will establish a direct and meaningful relationship with the space is mainly denied, and human exists as a passive character in the architectural design process. However, as a character who lives in the place, the human being should be seen as the process's trigger, identifier, and creator. This requires the collection, inclusion and processing of human information. Searching for the embedded with aware navigation in the designed space during the design process is considered essential. In this research, the frame of “embedded” is drawn by Bouman and Toorns' (1994, p.12) answer “The sign is visible, not the content to which the sign refers; the object is visible, not the action taking place in and around the object; the elegant, unique signature is visible, not the humdrumness of collective manners; the solution is visible, not the problem...” to the question “What is visible?”

Heathwick (2019) [1], in one of his speeches, mentions that the soulless state of architecture will be overcome by returning to human beings; the character will open up space for productivity. He says that this situation can only occur by giving an essential involvement to the human scale, perspective, and narrative in the process. This means that in the area of design thinking, human should be examined not only with their needs but also with their feelings, perceptions, actions, experiences and interactions. The main reason for this is that the expectations from designed places are more than the needs of humans.

Coates (2012) mentioned that radical movements highlight narrative as a mature field to explore and emphasise design needs to go beyond the visual and consider deeper issues of experience, association, and belonging. The human focus of this research established by the narrative differs from the definitions of “user” since the word “user” refers to the state of knowing the person who experiences the place. Besides, the unclear, variable, multiple, complex, and difficult-to-define user descriptions of the age requirements are not evaluated from a more general perspective or even as a user. It is foreseen that focusing on the human narrative in the design process will open new areas ranging from the intellectual to the social, physical, and even historical dimensions.

When a design process is examined, it is seen that the given program is mainly based on the construction of spatial relations as a result of evaluating and solving the problems arising from the relationship between the designer's infrastructure, the employer's wishes, the articles in the regulations, and the context. Tanju (2003) [2] says everything an architect assumes he knows when he sits in his architect's office and starts designing is about people he doesn't know, and so ways of knowing those people should be searched. Scheeren's (2016) [3] “form follows fiction” discourse means that the created environment is constructed not only functionally but also with

experiential fiction. With this research, the ways of getting to know people are discovered with narratives that record and traverse various viewpoints, actions, and situations and create their patterns by making invisible networks between them visible. (Figure 1)

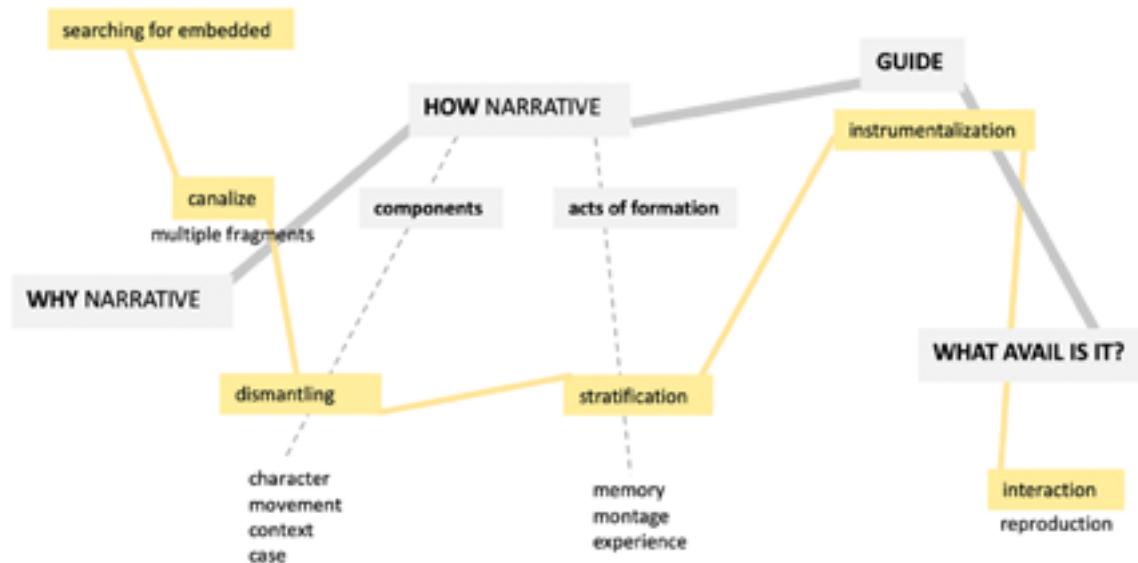


Figure 1. Concept map of research

3. How Narrative?

The Latin meaning of the narrative comes from the word “gnarus”, which means knowing. In the Oxford Dictionary, it is explained as a way of describing events to demonstrate a set of purposes or values. Ricoeur (1983) defines the construction of narrative as having a preliminary understanding of the value of human action, more precisely, contemplating the symbolism and temporality of expressiveness to imitate or represent an event. Coates (2012, p.129) states narratives in architectural design; “When thinking of entire buildings of any kind, their accommodation can be configured by a brief and a program, but interpreting the task as a series of interrelated situations shifts the design process into the manoeuvrable narrative territory.” He says it expresses a sensitivity and working style set out to include in the design method. In addition, he mentions that it frames an architecture that considers the need to transform human experience into a narrative in search of meaning rather than performance.

Blaylock (2003) defines narrative as an expression of what it means rather than a representation of what something is physical. This definition leads to the derivation of the meanings rather than physicality revealed by the inputs to be added to the design process with narratives. Some questions are asked based on the idea that the narratives will be re-knitted and interpreted in each design process and will open channels to produce more creative spaces in the design process. These questions are: “What should it include? How can a “narrative” be created in the design process?” It is considered necessary to make expansions on the components and formation of the narrative to seek answers. Expansions in this section constitute both the answers to the questions and the manual’s content. Also, it is thought that it will create the potential to extract information from an abstract representation of the observed object and transform it into a reconstructable data set with the effort of the designer.

In summary, narratives about humans may be used in all stages of the design process by making sense of the human being with the plot established in its context and with the natural internalisation and remembering opportunity provided by this. Based on the idea that designing is a dream-building process, this research plans to deal with dismantling the existing knowledge of the space to be designed and dismantling smaller components that will contribute to this knowledge.

3.1. Components

Character is assigned as an entity that creates meanings in the place with her wanderings and

reproduces the place more alive. Designers can take an imaginary tour on paper and encounter the randomness of the space with characters included in the design process. It is suitable for effective opening possibilities by taking the journey beyond the designed place within the depth of character details. Depth of details is constructed by the totality of physical, social, emotional, and psychological states. First, each character's depiction is thought to have the potential to establish his own perspective that dominates his narrative. In addition, while "telling" visually, emotionally, and perceptually, it is necessary to consider the point of view he draws, the language and representations he uses, and the data sets he chooses for the content. They are primarily the product of his own mind. The discourse of Barthes (1979, p.130), "I pass into the body, the body passes into the feeling, the emotion passes into the moment," refers to the subjectification of the self - the character - existing in the intermediate step of the major transitions. Qusenbergy and Brooks (2010) describe the creation of the character by explaining the expectations, giving valuable details, and while doing these, not only by telling but by showing, with various allusions, opening space for the reader to imagine, and even asking the character daily questions to make inferences from the character's behaviour.

Movement is the second component derived from the character's actions. It is depicted as an interface between the body and the environment or even more as a network. The movement of the body affects and changes the environment simultaneously. In the practice of architectural design, the body is mainly discussed in terms of size and mechanics. However, Stickell(2010) states that to understand how the new fluid state of architecture is reconstructed, one has to specifically grasp the concepts of motion and circulation and map them out by separating them from their previous conceptualisations. Ricoeur (1983) explains imitation and representation of movement by grasping beforehand what human activity is in its semantic structure, symbolism, and temporality. Also, a detailed reading of the flows, traces, circulations, and their interactions with the body and the environment must be investigated to understand an action. Ricoeur (1983) says that the symbolic articulations specific to the action have more temporal characteristics and the ability to express the action directly, and perhaps the need to describe it arises from here. The movement examined in the narrative with this research is included as a phenomenon that is not only a human-specific (but contrary to its nature) mechanical act but opens the physical, social, and sensory interaction areas between mind-body-space. Davis (1975), a psychologist and movement researcher, states that dance therapies build bridges between movement and speech and reflect both intrapsychic, interpersonal, and cultural patterns.

Context consists of the description of temporal, spatial, and social components. It will discuss topics such as where you are, the times you have passed through, and what they have created on human beings under this subtitle. At this point, grouping with specific sub-headings will be helpful to determine the content within the scope of the narrative. First, it should be noted that the physical context is opened in temporal, spatial, and their positions. The most basic of these descriptions can be done by asking "when, where" questions. At this point, a note from Barthes (1979) on a July morning in 1977: "A beautiful morning again after the overcast sky, the glimmer and delicacy of the atmosphere: as if nice and luminous silk; this empty moment creates a reality: it is something worth living. Morning shopping while the village is almost empty, I wouldn't change that for anything in the world" is an example that fully describes the physical context. Secondly, historical-cultural context is included. At this point, it is deemed necessary to ask several questions to understand how the character chosen by the narrator, while constructing the narrative, creates the historical-cultural context that he describes. Ricoeur (1983) explains that culture codes, such as genetic codes, are behavioural programs; like them, they give form, order, and direction to life.

The case chosen as the fourth component can be summarised as an entire narrative that characters create with action and context. In addition, the case is assumed to be an element fed from inside and outside the narrative. That makes it possible to read the factors which are both included in the narrative and exist indirectly without taking part in the narrative. Within the scope of this research, the case describes a space that arises from the character's positioning in a fictionalised narrative. It can be seen as a holistic reading of the grouping. Instead of a dull epilogue, this reading serves data that can be reconstructed even in the smallest narrative

moments. It is thought that defining the case will act as a bridge that enables the narrator to communicate with the data.

3.2. Acts of formation

For the production of narratives, some formation actions have been determined in the context of accumulation, processing, and construction of the components. These actions create a memory containing character, action, context, and case content with elaboration and explanation; montage with demodulation and connecting; and dreaming of experience with enaction and arousal.

Memory is a field where the collected data is stored in a specific order, and this order can be connected and read with unusual connections. To make the memory visible, “What content does it have? How is it formed? Where is it fed? How is it stored? How to call back? How to use?” questions are necessary to ask. Creation of meaning with these memorisations: Rumelhart and Norman (1983) explain the connections of specific titles represented in memory with the example of the word birthday, which connotes not only the technical meaning of it but also parties, gifts, friends, and relatives, and actual events that happened on your birthday. Fireman, Flanagan, and McVay (2003) explain memory in more concrete detail as it identifies some of the systems in which it resides. They also mention that images are central to autobiographical memory for various reasons and that almost all mnemonic systems are based on visual images. The imagery system should be seen as a way of not only storing a certain kind of information but also consciously manipulating it. Here, the relationship of the creative process with the act of remembering, which is based on uncertain encounters and has a random character, is considered more critical than regular memory inventories. Therefore, the area where the content is chosen, areas of awareness created by formal situations about how they are formed, actions, activities, and emotional effects that cause their storage and recall, and the awareness of the explanations about the manipulations of the user are considered significant.

A montage is considered a guide for connecting and interpreting data about character, action, context, and situation. It has the potential to create a new narrative each time by using the open-endedness of the components. Ricoeur (1983) mentions the semantic novelty in the narrative as it is based on the creation of the plot, which is itself a synthesis product, and it is under the influence of the plot, purposes, causes, and coincidences are brought together in the temporal unity of whole and complete action. In addition, Eisenstein (1942) specifies editing as the most powerful tool for creatively reshaping nature. It is planned to expand on how the data stored in the memory will be constructed to turn into a narrative. Data construction is affected by the nature of the productions on forming the relationship between each other. They will be positioned relative to each other and their place in the narrative. It is thought that montage has a structure where the meaning arising from the dynamics of the parts is well understood and designed in the relations between the elements. It even allows new relations to be born after they are combined beyond telling a subject smoothly and fluently. Montage has the potential to offer multiple perspectives, as well as provide the opportunity to explore alternative sequences of events and to question its relationship with all other elements. This creates a kind of stratification, and experiences are made sense and recorded in mind. Collected from various sources; “invert, add, repeat, map, cut, encode, defocus, transform, reduce, disassemble, place, juxtapose, superimpose, dissolve, accumulate, rearrange, combine, add, rotate, placement, removal, connection” concepts of montage have to be used in the establishment of narrative.

Dreaming of experience is explained with the discourse of Eisenstein (1949, p.27) “You must see and hear what you think about. You have to see it and grasp it. You have to hold it and place it in your memory and your sensations. And you must do it as soon as possible,” which opens up space for the inference of its holism and its importance in thought. Dreaming life creates an area where a holistic reading of the relationship between body, movement, context, and space can be made. Scheeren (2016) [3] responds to the question of how users’ fictional stories can code architecture with the answers: “Architecture that is a complex system can be established with the relationship of programmatic-functional ways and experimental-emotional-social ways” and “architecture while describing an organism as a life form, it can transcend the realm of physicality and carry the codes of human stories.” Each experience creates a unique cycle by

reproducing this network of relations in its own way. Everyday life is integrated with experiences, perceptions, and senses, passes through personal filters, and is recorded with codes that can be recalled. The visible state of the narrative presented with experience is an area that can be opened to the reader's interpretation. Understanding the subject that creates life and humans through mind-body integrity is valuable. Contrary to the production of a static place, architecture emerges as a constantly moving action and practice with its environment and user and is knitted with deep stratifications over time.

The narratives formed as a result of the construction of the components with the formation actions; it is thought that it has the potential to reproduce with a wide variety of breaks and crosses in itself. Eisenstein emphasises (1942) that the combination of two different shots by attaching them together resembles a multiplication rather than a simple sum of these two shots. It resembles multiplication rather than the sum because, in every such juxtaposition, the result is always qualitatively distinguishable from the pieces that are reviewed one by one, and the prediction that the subjectivity of the constructor will be created with the narratives which are thought to be articulated into the design process. For example, the narratives of a created memory, which are constructed with two different montages, can diversify the rewritten codes by turning to other experiences. Either the experiences established by different memories in which the same montage is connected can be realised entirely differently from each other.

4. Guide

The primary purpose of creating this narrative manual is to serve the proposal as a basis for forming a data set that allows the exploration of life possibilities in the small intermediate spaces of its parts. Each narrative that takes place or is thought to take place in space includes four different components: characters, movement, context, and case. Defining the actions necessary to construct a narrative is identified within the scope of this research.

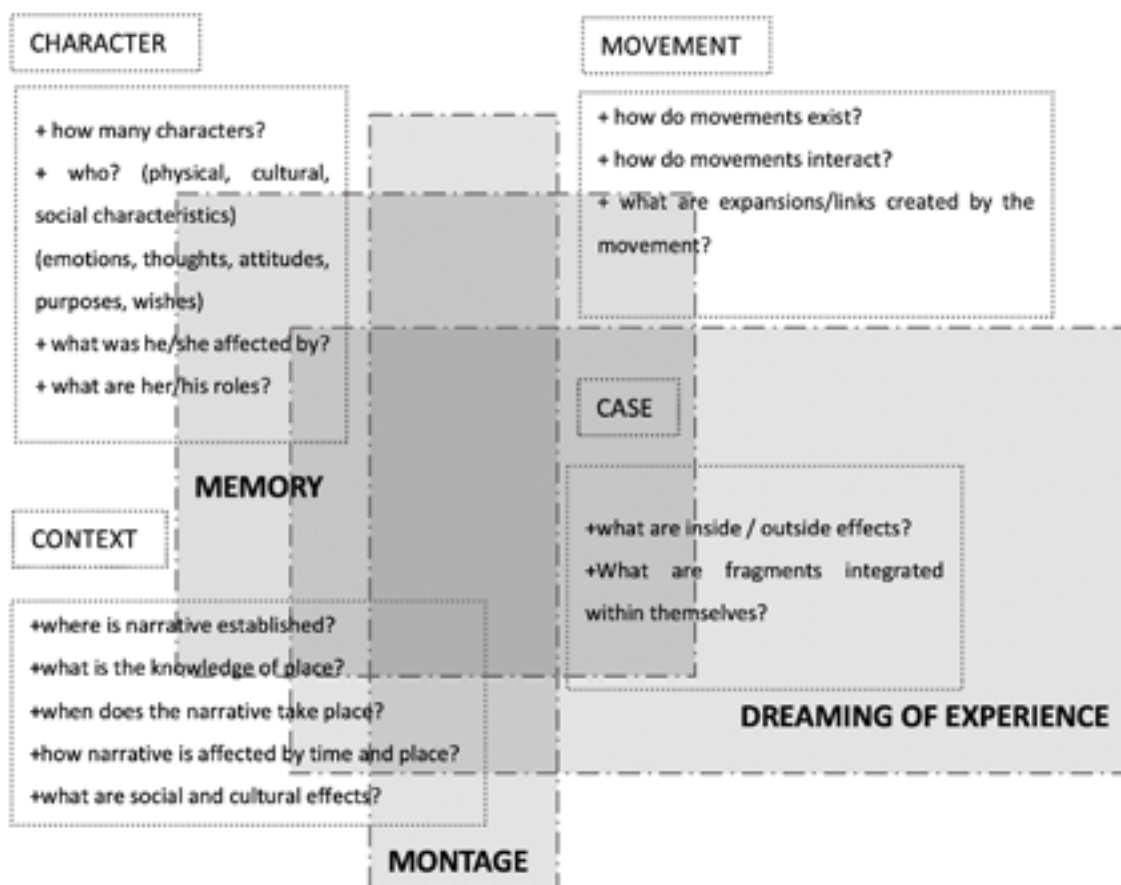


Figure 2. Basis Explanation of the Guide

The Manual consists of a base with various questions in it. The data collected on the subject is processed with these questions. (Figure 2) This process constitutes the identity of the narrative.

Afterwards, it allows the construction of narratives that include parts of life with audio-visual, moving or static representations that include actions, context, and the situation they create. This tool has been established to canalise the identifier of the narrative via networks to present and index in a clear and understandable way. These narratives are added on a representation of the place where the narrative takes place so that the relationship with the space can be read more clearly and the reader associates the narrative with the place. Exploring these narratives to select relevant information is part of the creative process.

Sanders (2002) states that many things can be learned about their experiences by listening to what people say, interpreting what they express, watching what they do, observing what they use, and understanding what they feel. It is thought that these comprehension activities can be supported by actions such as thinking from other perspectives, imagining, understanding, making decisions, judging, listening, speaking, thinking by drawing, sharing ideas, and learning. These discoveries tend to form the basis for a productive imagination in the design process. Barthes (1979) defines the tools of narrative as written verbal articulated language, moving or fixed pictures, gestures and a regular mixture of all these. Instead of using only textual expressions as a representation method; it is thought to provide more familiar data set to the designer by supporting these narratives with design tools such as drawing, photography, video, sound recording.

5. What Avail Is It?

While consciously avoiding borrowing the narrative from any field, it is intended to dismantle its contents and formations and open it up for discussion in the field of design. The narrative is considered a concept that is more open to positioning in the field of design due to its fragmented structure. Unlike the story, there is no certainty about the beginning and the end. Additionally, it allows it to be represented by the design tools, and its boundaries are more undefined. While Coates (2012) talks about the fact that the design process can be driven by narrative, regardless of the scale of the space to be designed, he says that narrative is about the ability to draw the world around you and make it light enough to step within the limits of the imagination. Narratives, which are constructed to convey the multiple knowledge of humans, are shaped by the creativity of imagination and are suitable for transformation. It can be considered a clue that removes daily experiences from being mere information and leads to new expansions in the connections established during the design process with these futures.

The narrative is examined with its components - formations and will be coded - and re-articulated as a tool in the design process. These expansions make it possible to explain the importance of the narrative's existence rather than the human needs in the architectural design process. When the human narrative is included in the design process, it allows many inputs to be processed, articulated, and collided simultaneously, such as diversity, contextuality, subjectivity, experience, animation, and the values it will create with experience. Nevertheless, it makes an important contribution to the inclusion of emotions, thoughts, and values in the design process. In other words, when the components of the narrative are included in the architectural design process by explaining its relationship with its fiction, actors and place, it paves the way for a comprehensive design discussion. All these efforts are thought to create a flow from explanation to understanding. As a result, it is predicted that the narrative anthology made for each design process will gain the possibility of creating an infinitely interpretable data set.

The field established by the narrative has the potential to make the unknown, which is thought to be known, visible by sometimes shrinking and sometimes enlarging the area it covers in the whole design process. However, while doing this, it intends to do something other than answer the design problems. Still, on the contrary, it has the potential to be a pioneer in the formation of sub-problems and to be used as a tool to question every data collected, every line drawn, and absolute decisions.

6. Conclusion

By understanding the past, the narrative opens up a space in the present to generate new ideas for the future. To understand and re-imagine the place, ways of knowing and relating the events experienced in it will be sought within narratives. Beyond the expected, dozens of

different actions are performed in one place. A holistic idea about the semantic structure of place can only be obtained by examining the existing narratives. These narratives are not represented spatially but are seen as a tool containing much information and relations about space. The architect-designer, who is associated with the fragmentary structure of the narrative, may find the ground for associating spatial information with these pieces. This kind of ground allows the architectural design process to be rethought through narrative. Narratives as a learning tool reveal the importance of human and assert their existence in the processes of understanding, reasoning, and creativity. It is concluded that the narrator and the audience are directed towards the creative process since constructing a narrative with a manual to the design process supports learning about the human experience. The guide produced within the scope of this research and the narratives to be established with the guide do not have a problem replacing analytical thinking and will give it context and meaning. It is envisaged that these narratives will stimulate communication and open the channels of thinking about the causes in addition to what and how.

Conflict of Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Endnotes

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