AcE-Bs 2012 Bangkok
ASEAN Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies,
Bangkok, Thailand, 16-18 July 2012

Identity and Public Realm

Ali Cheshmehzangi[*]

Division of Engineering, University of Nottingham Ningbo China, 199 Taikang East Road, University Park, Ningbo, 315100, China
Department of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, UK

Abstract

In a very general sense, Identities materialise space to create significance, meaning and spatial relations. In urban design terms, identity is considered to be a fixed point of thought and being or ground of actions. However, as Hall (1989) describes, identity is, in fact, a development or a progression towards creation of inter-relationships between oneself and other and vice versa. Consequently, this paper explores the term 'identity' and its implication in an urban context, and also focuses upon the meaning of identity in a public realm to identify how it influences the meaning that people attach to their environments.

*Keywords:*Idendity; public realm; relation;place making

1. Introduction

Kelbaugh and McCullough (2008, p. 64) elucidate that rather than origin of meaning, there is 'a regeneration of meaning and identity. A dross post-praxis dwells conceptually in what one could consider as the counterpart of parthenogenesis – the phenomenon of the virgin birth'. In light of this, space is not an exceptional and as Turin (1977, p. 34) describes, it is a conceptual term for range of compound ideas

---

[*] Corresponding author. Tel.:+ 86-574-8818 9237; fax: +86-574-8818-0175.
E-mail addresss: ali.cheshmehzangi@nottingham.edu.cn

that people, from different backgrounds and cultures, attribute values to its parts in an evaluative manner. According to this argument, urban identities are considered as social categories, with which space and society are both defined and can entail both 'role' and 'type' (Fearon, 1999, p. 17). For space, role describes the act of happenings in the environment; and type expresses the way space integrates within its context; therefore, both role and type aim to enhance the relations that are bound between space and society. In another words, this is developed through the concept of urban identity itself.

It is believed that information from any environmental system is based on its performance and its associated relations. Thus, actions taken place within the environment are outcomes of the urban system, which could modify qualities and adjust characters, inner developments and future inputs within a public place. These can also be expressed as activities or programmes taken place within a public realm. Therefore, it is debatable that a particular public realm could appear in many ways, that by itself, it might have no definite identity. This research study would therefore, scrutinize whether a public realm could have an identity on its own, and subsequently explores and clarifies the concept, meaning and forms of identity in the public realm.

This paper is part of a larger research project, focusing on not only the theories but also on the importance and implications of identity in our contemporary public realms. In a very conceptual approach, this study will scrutinize identity and place making as vital matters in achieving good public realm design. The theoretical outcomes from this paper will first debate and then support the relations between socio-behavioural and perceptual matters of a place. In light of this, three research questions are set to be explored as the main body of this conceptual paper:

- What are the forms and purposes of urban identity in a public realm? And how these can influence place identity for a better design?
- How can identity implement socio-behavioural environments and help to revive or promote image and sense of a place?
- How can socio-spatial interactions of a place determine relative identification and exposure of meanings and identities in a public realm?

1.1. Meaning of Urban Identity: The Definitions

Urban Identity is becoming a thriving theme in policies and design regulations and for many researchers and urbanists (Bentley and Watson, 2007; Hague and Jenkins, 2005; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Urry, 1995), it is described as a 'place-identity', which is explicitly referring to the concept of 'placeness'. This is also regarded as conceptualising a place through analysing and developing its characteristics and materials. Akin to this, Bentley and Watson (2007, p. 6) argue that, place-identity is a 'set of meanings associated with any particular cultural landscape which any particular person or group of people draws on in the construction of their own personal or social identities'. For them, place-identity is based upon the merging personal and social identities, supporting the argument that place-identity is a comprehensive reflection of meaning of place on individual's identity, which is a 'broadly encountered phenomenon' (ibid, pp. 3-4). This is also indirectly regarded as a relation both between the place and the way individuals visualise themselves; or/and how they may relate and picture themselves being imaged by others.

In contrary to this, Urry (1995, p. 1; in Hague and Jenkins, 2005) observes the concept of placeness differently and pertains to it as 'the understanding of place' that requires various techniques and investigation based on three major factors of space, nature and time. For Relph (1992, p. 37), however, place is a humane environment with a mixture of meaningful significances and social concerns, which are exposed as major components of 'meanings, activities and a landscape' that are all 'implicated and enfolded by each other'; therefore, we can elucidate that 'place is more than a location'. Nevertheless,

Relph, in his earlier research work (1976, p. 56), argues that place-identity often appears as the image of a place. He also asserts that '…to understand something of the social structure of images is an essential prerequisite for understanding identity', which expresses that identity of a place is not only production of various components but is socially constructed towards the whole image. However, using the term 'image' alone to reinstate definition of urban identity or placeness is not sufficient and as expressed by Boulding (1961; in ibid, p. 56), it is a comprehensive mental reflection that is based on amalgamation of 'experiences, attitudes, memories and immediate sensations'. Therefore, it is not accurate to define image as a sole perspective, but rather a multiple reflection of objectives and subjective matters of a particular place.

In addition to defining urban identity as the image of environment, we can refer to Lynch's theory of environmental image (1960, pp. 8-13), which considers identity as a subjective component in completing the image of a place. Akin to this, Lynch (1960, p. 8) analyses the environmental image into three components of 'identity, structure and meaning…which in reality always appear together'. For Lynch, identity of a place is a response to identification and recognition of objects in space, which is to distinguish one space from another. He also asserts that identity of a place cannot exist without the definite structure that '…spatial or pattern relations of the object to the observer and to other objects' are considerably included. He then refers to meaning of the objects for the observer, which can be both 'practical or/ [and] emotional', arguing that meaning itself is a relation that enhances the quality of spatial and pattern relation of space. From the combination of these three components, he then affirms that image of a place is formed or developed. However, the author argues that identity in an urban context is also a relation. Although in agreeing with Lynch's theory that identity is a component in forming the image of a place, we can claim that image is also a component to promote the identity of a place. In respect to this endeavor, Rose (1995, p. 88) pertains to place as being 'infused with meaning and feeling' that can ultimately shape the identity of a place. This is also regarded as 'sense of place', a term often used when describing urban identity that significantly supports theoretical values of spatial quality and society's well-being.

1.2. Placeness and Place Identity

A sense of place is what Relph (1976, p. 63) articulates as an 'authentic place-making'; and not urban identity. In fact, he describes the sense of place as a capability for recognition and differentiation which Nairn (1965; in ibid, p. 63) pertains to as an essentiality to distinguish localities: 'It seems a common place that almost everyone is born with the need for identification with his surroundings and a relationship to them with the need to be in a recognisable place. So sense of place is not a fine art extra, it is something we cannot afford to do without'.

In this respect, Cox (1968, p. 423) describes the concept of place-identity or urban identity as a sense of place, which is in fact, 'the sense of continuity of place necessary to people's sense of reality'. He also argues that by sensing a place, we define the associations and inter-relations between a place and individual as the basis of 'human existence and individual identity'. He refers to sensing and identifying a place as a range of consciousness, which is a response to what the environment bears a resemblance. This responsiveness relation is a collection of 'simple recognition to orientation, through the capacity to respond empathetically to the identities of different places', which also represent the identity of a place (ibid). Apart from being the concept of sincerity, which is to resemble authenticity (Trilling, 1971), sense of place is also regarded as the 'genius loci of place' (Norberg-Schulz, 1980), referring to the pervading 'spirit of place', in order to enhance, manipulate and heal our environments.

From all the above meanings of urban identity, we can scrutinise various definitions of this dynamic term. Urban identity is defined as 'place-identity', 'placeness', 'character of a place', 'image of a place',

'sense of place' and 'spirituality of place'. These all pertain to urban identity as the concept of 'distinctiveness', denoting that places are distinguishable from one another (Crang and Thrift, 2000; Crysler; 2003; Lynch, 1960). For this, Relph (1976, p. 43) points out that places are differentiated only due to their involvement of certain 'intentions, attitudes, purposes and experience'. As a result, places are distinguishable from their surrounding context even though they remain as part of it. Therefore, we can conclude that the urban environment cannot be defined autonomously, hence is related to certain characteristics, actions and significances; some of which are external elements. Moreover, Erickson (1959, p. 102), in a debate of ego identity, expresses that identity signifies both 'a persistent sameness with oneself….and a persistent sharing of some kind of characteristic with others'. Thus the essence of identity is both in the content (i.e. person or object) as well as in the context (i.e. culture or environment), where the content is taking part as an inherent value (Relph, 1976, p. 45).

By expanding this theory, Relph (ibid, p. 47) argues that 'meanings of places may be rooted in the physical settings, objects and activities, but they are not a property of them – rather they are a property of human intentioned and experiences'. Therefore, as discussed earlier, the mutual relationship between space and human is, in fact, what we can pertain to as the sense of place or the spirituality of place. Of the same theory, Gabriel Marcel (a French Philosopher; cited in Matore, 1966, p. 6) also states that 'an individual is not distinct from his place; [in fact] he is that place'. Heidegger (1969, p. 26) also adds to this statement by declaring that 'everywhere, wherever and however we are related to being of every kind, identity makes its claim upon us'.

2. Urban Identity: Forms and Purposes

In general, urban identity is consisted of qualities, characteristics and materials. It is mainly considered objectively as a material and subjectively as a characteristic; but for both cases it remains as a quality. Akin to this, Relph (1976, p. 61) asserts that urban identity or identity of a place is consisted of 'three inter-related components, each irreducible to the other – physical features or appearance, observable activities and function, and meanings or symbols'. The author, however, argues that urban identity is comprised of three generalised forms based on the above components. The physical elements and features can be regarded as a navigation mechanism that can also be the 'visual tool', with which the image is acknowledged. The structure of inter-relations can be regarded as the 'perceptual form' of urban identity, while actions and spatial inter-relations are the 'behavioural tool'.

2.1. Imageability and Urban Identity: A Visual Tool

Understanding a place comes from visibility and creation of place as an image. Image of a place, whether inclusive or collective, emphasises upon the importance of physicality of the place. Places may have become imageable on their own but what makes them associated with others is the awareness of signage and symbolism. Signage and symbolism are forms of understanding a place; however, they do not become meaningful merely because of their visibility in the urban environment. Thus, past memories and relations with particular elements can establish a signage or symbolism system in mind that can then help to enhance the imageability or urban identity of a place. Furthermore, signage itself is one of the most generalised ways in which identity of an environment is recognised. As it is elucidated by Walmsley (1988, p. 85), social categories, or in another words behavioural values, 'rest on shared [and collective] meanings and that meanings are systems of signs'; which in fact within the urban environment, this is considered as a very important factor in design. Akin to this, Lynch (1960, pp. 46-7) also emphasises upon the importance of nodes and landmarks as ways of enhancing legibility and identity of a place/city,

with which we can partly clarify that a building, for instance, can both be material and/or characteristics of an urban environment.

Accordingly, Walmsley (1988, p. 85) generalizes this theory and asserts that buildings are considered as a signage system at three various levels:

'First, the pragmatic level deals with the origins, uses (by those who make them), and effects of signs (on those who interpret them)....Next comes the semantic level which deals with the ways, in which signs actually carry meaning...the third level at which the semiotic approach can be used is the syntactic level. This deals with the combination of signs (e.g. buildings), irrespective of their specific meanings and the effects those meanings have on those interpret them'.

In this respect, both buildings and urban environments can appear as symbolic entities or landmarks. Symbolism itself is a trendy approach in urban design in order to make a place identifiable and distinctive. To Smith (1974; in Walmsley, 1988, p. 81), there are four kinds of symbolism that could be acknowledged in continuous stages of symbolism: the first kind is the '*archetypal symbolism*' (also by Cooper, 1974), which is the collective or even global kind of symbolism; the second type is the '*associational symbolism*', whereby a place or element may becomes symbolic through '*associations based on direct personal experience…*[that]*…is a very private affair…*[and]*…is beyond the control of environmental designers*'; the third type is the '*acculturated symbolism*', which is merely attached to the association, but from a cultural origin rather than the personal attachment; the fourth kind is the '*symbolism of the familiar*', which is based on our everyday visual and experience that '*comes to symbolise security and continuity*'.

Akin to this endeavor, the author suggests that symbolism appears in a wide range of forms and purposes in urban design. The use of colours in designing environments and buildings is one of the significant ways in achieving symbolism. Another approach is to exploit symbolism as a notifying or informing notion, and as discussed earlier, to enhance legibility of a place that can also configure the importance of individuality in the wholeness of a place. Moreover, symbolism is associated with personal and socio-environmental aspects of urban design, which also means that symbolism does not only appear as a singular element or distinguishable attribute, but can be employed in a subjective manner. Naming, for instance, is believed to '*connect self and identity*' (Ferguson, 2009, p. 90), not in a visual form but in a symbolic manner. Therefore, by imposing names, this influential approach in symbolism not only becomes a subjective matter but a perceptual form of the urban identity.

2.2. Social Behaviourism and Urban Identity: A Behavioural Tool

The terms social and behavioural are different - yet connected – forms for urban identity. In nearly every urban environment, social behaviorism of a place is either controlled by design or developed with it. Therefore, we can argue that environmental perception of any place has a mutual relationship with its social behaviorism. As for this research study, these are regarded as 'socio-environmental values' and 'spatial inter-relations', which signify that human behaviours are not only expressed by the objectivity of an environment. In reality, it is not the human behaviours that are developed but the inter-relations within the environment; and for this matter, the urban environments, in particular, are the basis for such developments to occur. What we remark and collect is, therefore, what promotes interactions and integrations in the urban environments. Thus, it is the 'environment as perceived rather than the real world which influences behaviors' (Walmsley, 1988, p. 109). Certain characteristics and urban formations are the major aspects for how environment can control or/and enhance the social behaviours. In addition, we can argue that social indicators are significant measurements, with which state of the environments is examined.

Urban identity as a behavioural tool appears as a humane objective and acts towards development of a place rather than making the place acknowledgeable. Nonetheless, we can argue that development itself is knowledge, which enforces the idea that the importance of developing relationships between man and his society depends on certain indications from society's structuring and functioning attributes; arguing that society could relate to personal identity of an individual as well as urban identity of the environment. However, as Perin (1970, p. 30) expresses, '…having an existence independent of man as a psychological being (that is, toward uncovering the structure and functions of society) has led the environmental design disciplines to believe that this constitutes the only valid way to conceive of and have theories about man in society'. In conclusion, and through examples of urban identity as a behavioural tool, we can argue that contemporary theories in urban design are constantly urging to develop social values of our urban environments.

2.3. Perception and Urban Identity: A Cerebral Tool

In an individual's mind, urban Identity is formed from a development of collective observations and relations. The relations one can have with an environment complete what one can perceive from the surroundings and the otherness. Part of this theory is recognised as 'social cognition', whereby the learning process of individuals is studied. A responsive perception of one being, coming to an urban environment, relates to being in multiple relations with other people and the environment as a whole. Accordingly, Deutsche (1995; in Kelbaugh and McCullough, 2008, p. 293) argues that difference or otherness is a necessity for the existence and growth of the urban environments. She particularly points out that the social environment does not have an identity of its own but is 'structured by multiple relationships'; therefore, we can argue that in order to achieve the sociality of urban environment, the perception of society needs to accept the place as a definable space. As a result, urban identity can also be a cerebral tool, through which, the sociality and meaning of urban environments are constantly articulated. As discussed earlier, identity by naming is a significant approach in design and is considered as a referencing mechanism when it comes to the sense and the process of recognition. As Williams (1989, p. 6) elucidates, one object can have multiple signs, but senses and signs are themselves objects for defining meaning or referencing of names. For this, we can argue that identity by naming is an inconsistent matter 'bound by a single quantifier' (ibid, p. 21). Therefore, relations between environment and name, as well as name with signs of objects, is what can be the initiating stage of an identity formation.

In general, urban identity, as a perceptual matter, emphasises upon the importance and development of meaning in urban environments. For this, Harvey (1996, p. 308) asserts spirituality of a place can only become definable by concentration of meaningful perceptions in a place, meaning that urban identity is considered as a mechanism to regenerate meaning and memory. However, urban identity as a perceptual tool is a fractional notion, which requires completion by another expression(s). Thus, one's perception of a place is not only different with the others but is different with his owns at various occasions. Consequently, Relph (1976, p. 56) explicates that '…within one person the mixing of experience, emotion, memory, imagination, present situation and intention can be so variable that he can see a particular place in several quite distinct ways'. We can, therefore, conclude that a place can have multiple identities to one person as well as to the whole society. Nonetheless, every time the place is experienced in a different way, the sociality and spatial inter-relations of it are become distinctive.

3. Discussions: Content and Context

Our everyday life is a network of processes whereby we, as part of a bigger context, aspire to develop and become developed. Norris Nicholson (in Koeck and Roberts, 2010, p.32) argues that '[These] contemporary processes… undermine urban identity, belonging and social cohesiveness. As regeneration trends swing through different urban locales, each with its own distinctive inheritance of challenges and opportunities, archive imagery may contribute in versatile ways to how we make real places relevant and meaningful'. Thus, identity of a place is a matter of socio-environmental values and spatial inter-relations, with which place also helps to develop as well as becoming developed itself. Therefore, it is not only the place that needs to be studied but also the human himself and how he behaves and relates to his environment. Environment appears to be extremely influential on human behaviours that the human associations with space become almost invisible; even though it is the human that defines the space at the very beginning of its existence. This is the term that Baker (2003, p. 323) pertains to as the 'emotional and behavioural effects of the environment, and its ambience'.

Moreover, we can assert that studying human behaviours and social life of a place have always been significant studies of the social sciences. The term 'content' is mainly expressed as self; and 'context' is understood as circumstance or environment. The integration between society and an individual can be regarded as the inter-relation that content and context create in order to complete each other and develop into a comprehensive wholeness. In contrast, however, the concept of inter-relation between the content and context comes from the changing character of self in various circumstances or contexts. Fearon (1999, pp. 11-13) argues that this theory comes from the question 'who are you?' and the various answers one (i.e. content) will give in different circumstances (i.e. context). He concludes that one might have multiple identities; therefore possibility of having different answers will depend on different contexts that self is associated with at different times. Nonetheless, the critical point about the above theory is that both content and context are subject to change; therefore, one can influence, manipulate and even change the other. Walmsley (1988, p. 23) also confirms that in constructivism, 'what is known is actually constructed by an individual while that individual is engaged in interaction with the environment'. Therefore, reality and what we perceive is actually the 'act of knowing' (ibid).

3.1. The Environmental Framework: Identity and Public Realm

Aldo Van Eyck (1969, p. 109) states that with mutual relations with spatiality of any environment, there is a 'collectively conditioned place consciousness' that promotes the sense of being, sense of belonging, sense of place and most of all the identity of a place. Relph (1976, p. 34) also adds to this statement that '…people are their place and a place is its people'. Therefore, public realms, as the major social places of any city, can play a vital role in influencing socio-behaviourism as well as articulating relations in experiencing and identifying urban identities of the environments. However, public realms are not always the major social places, but to some extent are liveable and collective nodes of the environmental framework of a city. In this respect, public places of a city can also be considered as dynamic parts for the changing and developing form of a city, and are certainly distinguished as the informative nodes, with which we perceive information and develop an image.

Peter Arlt (in Haydn and Temel, 2006, pp. 48-49) argues that the constructed environment needs to be related to a much comprehensive social context, and only in this respect, space can become a 'product of social activity'. The French Philosopher, Henri Lefebvre (1991; in Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007, p. 18) defines space as production of processes, for which urban place can become both a medium and a product. Lefebvre (1991, in Hayden and Temel, 2006, p. 49), also concludes that urban place is defined by 'social praxis' that can structure the society as well being socially constructed itself. Akin to this, he

argues that urban place is not only an 'abstract space' but also a place consisted of differences, social experiences, images and perceptions. He then introduces two dimensions representing the space; one is the perceived space and another is the imaged space:

'…the first dimension represents perceived space, and is concerned with the collective production of urban reality, in other words: with the rhythms of work, home life and leisure activities in which a society decodes and reproduced its spatiality. The next dimension is that of imagines space, shaped by forms of knowledge, as well as by signs and codes. This level involves representations of space'.

In the same context of argument, we can add that human beings certainly have 'common and innate neurological mechanisms for handling incoming information' (Walmsley, 1988, p. 6). Therefore, they tend to engage with the social experiences in order to impose new behaviours and inspirations, meaning that individuals, as the permanent social categories of a society, behave through their adapted perspective manners. Latour (after Akrich, 1992, p. 232) refers to this as a 'prescription', which refers to the imposed mechanisms for constructing behavioural environments. Haydn and Temel (2006, pp. 67-8) explore this theory of collectiveness and distinctiveness by identifying boundaries of spaces as incompatible components to the wholeness of a city. Nevertheless, they argue that representation of these boundaries, being perceived in various ways, can certainly manipulate the city and its environments. In this respect, a public realm can penetrate 'the built body of a city like a kind of meta-space, contained by the intersection of existing boundaries…[therefore]…public space is not an objective fact…[but is]…constantly being constructed anew on the basis of negotiation and appropriation' (ibid). The foremost point for this fact is, therefore, the exploration of space as source of possibilities and potentials, whereby needs, objectives and desires of human beings are considerably implemented.

3.2. Identity and Public Realm: Matters of Place Making and Socio-spatial Interactions in a Place

By observing the interacting process and spatial inter-relations of the urban environment, Lynch (1960, p. 6) remarkably emphasises upon the importance of the relations between the human and his environment:

'Environmental images are the result of a two-way process between the observer and his environment. The environment suggests distinctions and relations, and the observer – with great adaptability and in the light of his own purpose – selects, organizes, and endows with meaning what he sees'.

In a similar context, Stevens (2007, p. 27) defines socio-spatial interaction as a play that normally happens in four 'interrelated ways in which playful behaviour can be experienced as an escape from other aspects of everyday life in the contemporary city'. The first way entails 'actions which are non-instrumental'; the second way happens in 'boundary conditions and rules which separate play from the everyday'; the third way involves 'specific types of activities through which people test and expand limits'; and the fourth is a play that involves 'encounters with strangers' or the others. Similarly, the author refers to the concept of 'play' as activities and actions of place that are often examined and experienced together. Therefore, the socio-spatial qualities and characteristics of a place are embodied through humanistic initiatives, determining further identification and exposure of meanings and identities that are bound together as existential manifests and properties of a place. These characteristics and qualities are matters of processes that entail both the objectivity and subjectivity of a place, which ought to be recognised as a totality (i.e. wholeness), rather than their recognition and appreciation as segregated entities. Therefore, we can assert that place is a unity of human, spiritual and natural phenomena (Heidegger, 1967) that also clarifies the concept of interrelation, which the author epitomizes as the essence of identity in an urban environment.

Identity is then a developing matter towards constructing man's socio-behavioural networks and perceptual framework of his surroundings and happenings. Nevertheless, perceptual space is a

continuously varying space that may only articulate strong associations between an individual and a place; but may not necessarily allow the same to occur between the whole community and the same place. In this respect, it does not have a stable structure as opposed to the existential space, which is the basis of what architectural or environmental determinism refers to in terms of human-to-space inter-relations. Through various socio-spatial relations, one can connect and reconnect to the happenings as well as the others while the place appears as a frame of environmental knowledge comprising various elements, paths, nodes, activities and actions that often develop as reference points for transitory perceptions, which are then developed into meanings, memories, identities and social experiences. In general, this study serves to corroborate the fact that our existential space is an amalgamation of a system of co-ordinates and mutual interrelations, which is certainly subject to change, decay, growth and development. In architecture and urbanism, space is a phenomenon that is the basis of both actions and activities, which are either constantly developing together or transforming as separate entities that are often in synchronization together. It ought to be drawn to attention that these synchronizing attributes also correspond to the three dimensions of behavioural, social and perceptual, which are all direct and indirect representations of the happenings and the values of our existential space. Therefore, as Lynch (1960, p. 43) asserts, on the basis of three matters of informative norms, stability and meaning, 'people adjust to their surroundings and…[then]…extract structure and identity out of the material at hand'; which in a way, is what we can refer to as a continuous process of change and readjustments that is dependent on the actual forms, socio-spatial patterns and matters of inter-relations.

3.3. Conclusions: Suggestions and Debate

It is yet debatable that a particular public realm could appear in many ways that by itself, it might have no definite identity at all. By looking into the concept of placeness, it is almost inevitable to define place without activities and actions; therefore, programming of a place does not necessarily change what the space should represent, but can certainly define and revive its essence towards a better understanding of the community and its immediate context. In this respect, a public realm is an essential part of its context and is also defined through its relations with external qualities and elements; meaning that it is a systemised node relating to its bigger context. Nonetheless, this research paper has accentuated upon the relationship between human and his environment in order to define the implications of change and activities on developmental psychology. This paper has also explored the importance of environmental knowledge and how it matters to place identity, which means that in different stages of psychological development of an environment, individual is engaged with a series of perceptual and qualitative modifications, with which he interprets and images the environment in mind. In essence, as Walmsley (ibid) puts it well, accumulation of information and developing the environmental perception involve 'a qualitative shift from action-in-space to perception-of-space to conceptions-about-space' as we develop our intellectual aptitude. Therefore, this development has a major impact on how we image and sense the identity of a particular place; i.e. the sense of place towards understanding self in society.

In addition, Piaget (1968, pp. 7-8) notably argues that:

'…all needs tend first of all to incorporate things and people into the subject's own activity, i.e. to 'assimilate' the external world into the mental structures that have already been constructed; and secondly to readjust these structures as a function of subtle transformations, i.e. to accommodate them to external objects'.

He also argues that what we perceive and develop as environmental knowledge is not only based on a singular knowledge of self or an environment on its own, but is also a developing process shaped from the knowledge of interactions. Relph (1976, p. 59) adds that identity of a place is simply not 'patterns of physical and observable features, nor just as products of attitudes'; but it is, in fact, a complete and

overlapping amalgamation of all these. In this respect, we can argue that identity of a place is an 'expression of the adaptation of assimilation, accommodation and the socialisation of knowledge to each other' (ibid). Therefore, urban identity is a vital source in developing both the perceptual and socio-behavioural understanding of any environment. The knowledge of interactions provides such growth to occur and then promotes valuable spatial inter-relations. This particular knowledge can be regarded as collective knowledge for the behavioural and social dimensions of urban identity. Finally, the author asserts that these two intimately tied dimensions have strong and mutual associations with the perceptual dimension of urban identity. Therefore, it is not only the subjectivity of place that is important for spatial inter-relations, but rather the changing physicality of a place, which is a dynamic material for identity of a place. Both subjectively and objectively, spatial changes concern various perceptual, social and behavioural modifications, which are fundamental means of urban identities. In this respect, Buckley (1991; in Archer et al, 1984, p. 13) states that spatial changes happen as intricate systems and are generally adaptive. Furthermore, we can conclude that urban environments have similar characteristics. Therefore, self-maintenance or the 'morphostasis' system (ibid) can indicate change as dynamic part of urban identities. In this respect, we can conclude that a public realm does not have a certain identity but is rather fulfilled with several changing identities.

Acknowledgements

References

Akrich, M. and Latour, B. (1992) A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies; in Bijkar W. E and Law, J. (eds.) Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Socio-technical Change, Cambridge and Massachusetts: MIT Press

Archer, S. E., Kelly, C. D. and Bisch, S. A. (1984) Implementing Change in Communities: A Collaborative Process, St Louis: The C.V. Mosby Company

Baker, P. (2003), Secret City: Psycho-geography and the End of London; in Kerr, J. and Gibson, A. (eds.) London from Punk to Blair, London: Reaktion, pp. 323–33

Boulding, K. (1961) The Image, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Carmona, M., Tiesdell, S. 2007, Urban Design Reader, Oxford: Architectural Press

Cooper, C. (1974) The House as Symbol of the Self, in J. Lang et al. (eds.) Designing for Human Behaviour: Architecture and the Behavioural Sciences, Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, Stroudsburg, pp. 130-46

Cox, H. (1968) The Restoration of a Sense of Place, Athens: Ekistics (The Problems of Science and Human Settlements), Volume 25, pp. 422-424

Crang, M. and Thrift, N. (2000) *Thinking Space*, London and New York: Routledge

Crysler, C. G. (2003) *Writing Space: Discourses of Architecture, Urbanism and the Built Environment 1960–2000*, London and New York: Routledge.

Deutsche, R. (1995) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, Cambridge: M.I.T. Press

Erikson, E. (1959) Identity and the Life-cycle, *The Journal of Psychological Issues* 1 (1), pp. 171-192.

Eyck, A. V. (1969) *A Miracle of Moderation*; in Jencks, C. and Baird, G. (eds.) *Meaning in Architecture*, London: The Cresset Press

Fearon, J. D. (1999) *What is Identity – as We Now Use the Word?,* Stanford: Stanford University (PDF Document)

Ferguson, H. (2009) *Self Identity and Everyday Life*, Oxon: Routledge

Gilroy, P. (1997) *Diaspora and the detours of identity*; In Woodward (1997), *Identity and Difference (Culture, Media and Identities Series)*, London: Sage Publications Ltd., pp. 299–346

Harvey, D. (1996) *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Oxford: Blackwell

Haydn, F.; and Temel, R. (2006) *Temporary Urban Spaces: Concepts for the use of City spaces*, Berlin: Birkhauser Verlag AG Publishers

Heidegger, M. (1967) *Vorträge und AufsätzeI,* Neske: Pfullingen

Heidegger, M. (1969) *Identity and Difference*, New York: Harper and Row

Hague, C. and Jenkins, P. (2005) *Place Identity, Planning and Participation*, London: Routledge

Hall, E. T. (1989) *Beyond Culture*, New York: Anchor Books

Kelbaugh, D. and McCullough, K. K. (2008) *Writing Urbanism*, London and New York: Routledge

Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*, Oxford : Blackwell

Lynch, K. (1960) *The Image of the City*, Cambridge: The MIT Press

Madanipour, A. (2003) *Public and Private Spaces of the City*, London: Routledge

Matore, G. (1966) *Existential Space*, the Journal of Landscape, 15 (3), pp. 5-6

Nairn, I. (1965) *The American Landscape*, New York: Random House

Norberg-Schulz, C. (1980) Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture, London: Rizzoli

Norris Nicholson, H. (2010) 'Old World Traditions … and Modernity' in Cunard's Transatlantic Films, c. 1920–35: Making Connections between Early Promotional Films and Urban Change'; in Koeck, R. and Roberts, L. (eds.) The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan

Perin, C. (1970) With Man in Mind: An Interdisciplinary Prospectus for Environmental Design, Cambridge: The MIT Press

Piaget, J. (1968) Six Psychological Essays (Ed D Elkind), New York: Vintage Books

Relph, E. (1976) Place and Placelessness, London: Pion Limited

Relph, E. (1992) 'Modernity and the reclamation of place', in Seamon, D. (ed.) Dwelling, Seeing and Designing: Towards a phenomenological ecology, New York: State University of New York Press

Rose, G. (1995) '*Place and identity: a sense of place*', in Massey, D. and Jess, P. (eds) *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalisation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press/Open University Press

Stevens, Q. (2007) *The Ludic City: Exploring the Potential of Public Places*, Oxon: Routledge

Trilling, L. (1971) *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Cambridge and Massachusetts: Harvard University Press

Urry, J. (1995) *Consuming Places*, London and New York: Routledge

Walmsley, D. J. (1988) *Urban Living: The Individual in the City*, Harlow: Longman Scientific and Technical

Watson, G. B. and Bentley, I. (2007) *Identity by Design*, Oxford: Architectural Press (Elsevier)

Williams, C. J. F. (1989) *What is Identity?*, Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press