



The  
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**An interdisciplinary socio-spatial approach towards understanding  
identity construction in multicultural urban spaces**

Submitted by

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*கேடில் விழுச் செல்வங் கல்வி யொருவற்கு  
மாடல்ல மற்றை யவை - குறள் 400*

*Ketil Vizhuchchelvam Kalvi Yoruvarku  
Maatalla Matrai Yavai- Couplet 400*

*Learning is the true imperishable riches; all other things are not riches.*

## Abstract

Today people increasingly encounter unequal political, economic, symbolic and cultural geographies which make spatial encounters involve greater challenges for the negotiation of one's identity; as a result, the identity undergoes a more dynamic and continuous process of adaptation and reconstruction. The global phenomenon of identity crisis has been dealt with from different perspectives by many scholarly disciplines, yet a comprehensive understanding of identity construction amidst the growing multicultural nature of cities that embraces a socio-spatial approach is clearly missing. In this context the research draws insights from concepts of identity and place taken from the fields of human geography, phenomenological philosophy and social psychology, and strives to reveal their relevance for spatial design thinking. Acknowledging the missing link between these disciplines for identity research, relevant concepts are synthesised towards building a theory which approaches identity construction through an interdisciplinary triadic lens comprising *experience*, *place* and *meaning*. The research employs exploratory/pilot studies (to provide conceptual framework and test methods for data collection and analysis) and main case study to study people-place relationships. The main case study for this research was based in Sheffield, UK. The research participants included 15 international students studying at the University of Sheffield. Data collection was carried out through diverse methods of participant observation, in-depth qualitative interviews and visual research methods. The study employed an interdisciplinary framework for data analysis developed from recent theories in social psychology (Motivated Identity Construction Theory) and human geography (Relph's different levels of place experiences). Furthermore, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was used in interpreting the rich and complex data. Informed by these techniques, this interdisciplinary research sought to explore identity construction in contemporary urban contexts, and brings to light the prominent role of spatial practices in identity construction and their implications for an integrated multicultural society. The research presents a set of socio-spatial propositions that potentially define identity construction in multicultural urban spaces in contemporary cities. These propositions play an important role in understanding various factors which influence people's sense of identity, and are potentially significant in providing guidance for urban design interventions and planning in contemporary cities. The research outcomes include the interdisciplinary analytical framework and the socio-spatial propositions, contributing to the methodological and theoretical knowledge in understanding the complexity of identity construction/negotiation in contemporary urban contexts.

## Preface

The study of people and place exhibits simultaneously a complex yet subtle relationship, which personally has always been the most intriguing and inspiring line of thought throughout my research pursuits. We acknowledge our need to feel connected, to belong, and to identify with places we experience. Yet looking at a larger canvas of our place experiences, the underlying manifestations of identity negotiations and constructions through spatial practices are largely neglected by designers. This has resulted in peoples' superficial engagement with the environment, ensconcing the concept of identity, which has become gradually detached from the place being experienced. With growing alienation, placelessness and lack of identity in the contemporary built environment, places are gradually reduced to muted backdrops in which events occur. Built environments today are arguably increasing our inability to connect with the places we experience, creating an estrangement between one's identity and place, leading to a state of conflict. Despite substantial literature existing on the identity crisis experienced by people today, there have been few attempts made to study the relationship of identity-people-place in depth, largely owing to its inherent complexity. Examining multifarious literature in the domain of identity and the built environment, it was evident that there is a lacunae in understanding identity in relation to physical context. Caught within a labyrinth of social, cultural, physical and psychological factors, the notion of identity formation in the built environment becomes extremely difficult to understand and hence remains obscure. In this light, this research is an attempt to disentangle the complexity of identity constructions and to understand the manifestations of identity in the spatial experiences of everyday lives amidst the contemporary urban built environment.

During the first year, my research questions evolved from a quest to discern identity experiences in our built environment to gradually become more specific, addressing the issue of identity negotiations and construction in multicultural urban spaces. Introducing the issue of multiculturalism though increased the challenge of comprehending identity concepts; it did however add significance to the research itself due to the need to address identity negotiations and construction of the growing multi-cultural urban environment. I initiated my research with preliminary exploratory studies, interviews and participant observations to understand the current perceptions and attitudes of people towards the built environment, and their negotiations with the physical world. The conclusions offered valuable insights which helped in reinforcing my research questions and refining the context for the main case study. The exploratory studies were also a great platform to test some methods and approaches that could be adopted for the

main case studies, and they played a major role in developing the overall research design and methodology.

One of the challenges I faced in studying the complex phenomenon of identity construction was the lack of a clear methodology to capture both the observable and tacit aspects of peoples' experiences in the urban environment. This spurred me to explore related and relevant concepts in other disciplinary areas, and realising the potential contribution of other disciplines to this research and the limitations of the existing disciplinary boundaries for identity studies, I developed an interdisciplinary methodology for this research. The methodology was also instrumental in unravelling the significance of the symbiotic relationship between spatial and non-spatial disciplines which included human geography, social psychology, phenomenology and architecture. With the interdisciplinary methodology, the main case aimed to study the identity negotiations and constructions of international students in the everyday urban spaces in Sheffield. Complex and rich data was generated using diverse methods and was analysed using the interdisciplinary framework. Data interpretation was based on the same assumptions which were outlined to make the research process transparent. Being an international student myself enabled me to have an empathetic approach to the whole process of the study, while at the same time being mindful of its possible impact on the research itself.

One of the strategies I employed throughout this research was to seek constant feedback from interdisciplinary scholarly audiences by presenting various stages of my research at international conferences which were both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary platforms. The richness of this research domain also enabled me to develop various chapters and sections of this thesis as standalone journal papers; parts of Chapter 3 of this thesis have been published as a journal paper titled 'Understanding identity construction in urban environment through a triadic interdisciplinary lens', in *Research in Social Change Journal*. Some of the discussions in Chapter 2 has been published as a journal paper titled 'Identity Negotiations: Architectural Design Challenges in Multi-cultural Urban Environment' In *Architecture and Environment Journal*. The methodological framework developed in this research (Chapter 5) received the best paper prize at London Centre for Social Studies (LCSS) PhD Conference 2013 on Methodological Choices and Challenges, at King's College London, and was subsequently accepted for publication in *Social Sciences Review* (in press Oct 2014) in its special issue on *Methodology*, where my article is entitled 'An interdisciplinary framework of analysis for understanding identity construction in multicultural urban spaces in Sheffield UK'. In Chapter 4, Section 4.3 Everyday Context has been published in *Agathos, An international Review of the Humanities and Social Science* as a paper entitled 'Everyday landscape and meaning in urban living'. The various concepts and themes that

emerged from the main case study analysis have been published in *Kaleidoscope: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Institute of Advanced Study* journal entitled '*The dialectic of place and passage of time in urban living*'. Some of the discussion of the case studies will be published as a book chapter entitled '*Four Themes to (Phenomenologically) Understand Contemporary Urban Spaces*' in *Designing Experience: Concepts and Casestudies*' edited by Peter Benz, Bloomsbury Publishing (in press Dec 2014). The reviewers comments and the overall feedback I received for my journal papers, book chapter and paper presentations have provided the valuable discipline-specific expert feedback on the various aspects of this research, enabled more critical thinking at crucial phases of my research and provided a testing ground for both methodology and theoretical developments.

Apart from the main contribution of providing an interdisciplinary understanding of identity from a socio-spatial perspective and highlighting its significance, this thesis in its essence represents a sincere reflection on the power of place in identity construction and the need *to be in place* in the contemporary urban context.

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## Structure of the thesis

The thesis is presented in seven chapters organised into three main parts: **Part I Introduction** is comprised of three chapters and delves into the domain of identity and place and expands on the interdisciplinary approach of this research. **Chapter 1 Identity and Place** focuses on the need for identity and discusses various identity concepts and their inherent complexities. The role of space/place in understanding identity is explained. **Chapter 2 Urban Complexity** begins by discussing the issue of place experiences in a broader urban context. It delineates the characteristic nature of urban living in global cities and how the designed environment in these cities affects the socio-cultural and spatial practices of people. The chapter also explains the changing conception of place, identity and culture and discusses how this challenges architectural understanding of identity. The chapter highlights the potential significance of physical settings in studying identity, which is often ignored by some core disciplines. In **Chapter 3 Need for Interdisciplinarity** the need for an interdisciplinary understanding of identity is discussed and the potential contributions from three disciplines —human geography, social psychology and phenomenology— are explored and their inclusion in this research justified. The chapter delineates how these three disciplines offer the required depth and coverage for studying people and place relationships.

**Part II Methodology** explaining in detail the methodology adopted and the analysis framework developed for this research: **Chapter 4 Methodology** explains the research paradigm, methodology and strategy, the researcher’s positionality, data collection methods and analysis. This chapter is particularly significant as it explicates the concepts that are used for developing the interdisciplinary framework of analysis which is a part of the contribution of this thesis.

**Part III Case Study, Analysis and Discussion** is comprised of the final three chapters of this research. **Chapter 5 Exploratory Studies** elaborates on the need for understanding identity in a multicultural context. This chapter is significant as it clearly presents the complexity of the context and discusses the various levels of the physical context identified for this research study. Moving from the larger context of multicultural cities, the chapter zooms down to the level of the everyday urban spaces and explores the importance of the everyday realm for this research. In the final level of the research context, the specific typology of urban space referred to as ‘incidental spaces’ studied in this research is discussed. It explains the two exploratory studies conducted in this research, where their analysis and inferences are presented, and various aspects of the pilot studies which informed the overall research questions and methods for main case study are highlighted. In **Chapter 6 Main case study**, aims and objectives the main case

study are described, and the data collection and interdisciplinary analysis of the data are presented. In the final **Chapter 7 Summary and conclusions**, the research is summarised and the inferences from the previous chapter are synthesized. The methodological and theoretical contributions of this research are discussed. The contribution of this research is explained, supported by illustrations. The chapter presents the conclusion of this research, and finally outlines the limitations of this research and potential trajectories for further research.

## Research statement

Though several studies have been conducted into the domain of identity in various disciplines, from an architectural and urbanism perspective, a considerable amount of research data on identity construction drawn from different disciplines remains fragmented and dispersed. This is largely due to a lack of perceived significance of place and spatiality as crucial aspects in shaping peoples' identity in both spatial (geography, architecture , urban design) and non-spatial disciplines (social psychology, cultural studies), and also because of the missing essential thread that link these insights to architecture. To address this lack would potentially provide designers with a deeper and clearer understanding of the relationships between identity and urban environments. One's identity is caught in a labyrinth of diverse factors that affect it— as a practice and a discipline encompassing all aspects of people and place, the issue implores a liberal address by researchers in the field of architecture, which has surprisingly given it little scholarly attention. Current research on people-place-identity from scholarly fields of human geography, phenomenological philosophy and social psychology has produced rich and diverse literature unfolding notions of identity from different standpoints. Yet they are mostly rendered ineffective for the domain of architecture, due to the somewhat specific nature of the writing from these disciplines, and also due to the lack of an innovative framework within which architects can reinterpret these revelations for an architectural understanding. This necessitates a renewed multi-dimensional approach in research to disentangle the complexity of identity, providing more directly understandable insights and applicable qualities for designers, architects and urban planners which could potentially augment and improve interaction with the built environment for all citizens.

The research strives towards addressing the knowledge gap and the lack of interdisciplinary understanding of identity construction in architecture, and aims to provide the missing link between the chosen disciplines and architecture by proposing a socio-spatial understanding of identity in multicultural urban environments. Drawing insights from current research on people-identity-place from diverse scholarly fields including human geography, phenomenological philosophy and social psychology, the thesis strives to reveal the relevance of these insights for socio-spatial perspectives of understanding identity construction and negotiation in urban environments. Within the context of the multicultural urban environment the research focuses on the domain of everyday urban spatial practices which are potentially significant for understanding the deeper meanings of unselfconscious spatial experiences and behaviour of people .

Building on the issues of multiculturalism and identity in contemporary cities, this research aims to address the research question:

What is the role of place in peoples' identity construction/negotiation in multicultural urban environments?

The research employs exploratory/pilot studies (to provide conceptual framework and test methods for data collection and analysis) and main case study (based in multicultural city of Sheffield) to study people-place relationships. The objectives of this research are

- To comprehend the concept of identity in the light of contemporary spatial practices of international students in Sheffield.
- To identify the implications of socio-spatial aspects of people and place experiences for identity construction and negotiation in multicultural urban environments.
- To examine the relative significance of socio-cultural and spatial factors in identity construction.
- To understand the significance of place in understanding identity construction in social psychology and human geography .
- To understand the relationship between different modes of place experience and identity construction.

By addressing the key question this research attempts to develop an interdisciplinary theoretical framework for understanding identity construction for both spatial and non-spatial disciplines. The various case studies (two exploratory studies and the main case study) of this research provide empirical data to support and highlight the significance of the inter disciplinary understanding of identity constructions in urban environments. The theoretical framework is presented as a set of socio-spatial propositions which define peoples' identity negotiations in the urban environment. The multidimensionality and the complexity of identity as a research domain demand a comprehensive framework for analysis and an interdisciplinary framework was developed as a part of the methodology for this research. Hence the original contribution of the research is twofold, theoretical and methodological: both address the existing knowledge gap in identity research in architecture and urbanism and also in other related disciplines.

## Key terms

For the purpose of this thesis the key terms are understood as follows

### Identity

Identity in this research is understood in terms of how people develop a sense of relatedness with a place through interaction, which enables their sense of identity with the environment. The research here adopts the relational identity concept<sup>1</sup> where the context includes the socio-spatial realm, with identity being developed through peoples' response to, and their interaction with, the physical environment.

### Identity construction/negotiation

Identity construction/ negotiation in this research is understood as the way people interact, adapt, and devise strategies to enable place engagement which gradually develops, restructures or reconstitute their sense of identity.

### Space/place

According to geographer Robert David Sack, if seen from the point of view of one's experience, 'place differs from space in terms of familiarity and time'.<sup>2</sup> Hence 'place requires human agency'<sup>3</sup> and also time if we are to know what a place means. The notion of space and place as used in this research is drawn from the view that in the contemporary context, due to the increasing mobility of societies, 'places are merged into one another losing track of their qualities and they may coalesce into the sense that we are moving through space'.<sup>4</sup> This concept is appropriate to this research as it delves into the contemporary urban context, and hence space and place are considered and used as terms whose boundaries blur and that become intertwined, depending on and defined by contingent activities and objects. The complexities of this blurring will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1, along with differing disciplinary and individual uses of these terms.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruthellen Josselson, "Identity and Relatedness in the Life Cycle," in *Identity and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Harke A Bosma et al. (SAGE Publications, 1994), 81–102, 86.

<sup>2</sup> Robert David Sack, *Homo geographicus: a framework for action, awareness, and moral concern* (Baltimore [etc.]: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

## **Multicultural**

Multiculturalism in this research understood to relate to several ethnic groups or cultural groups within a society. However in research case studies and context, it is broadly understood in terms of relating different nationalities.

## **Intended Audience**

Given the main purpose of this thesis —to develop an interdisciplinary understanding for identity construction in multicultural urban spaces—the primary audience includes architects, urban designers and planners. The interdisciplinary nature of this research widens the audience group to include, but is not restricted to:

### **Researchers in Urban and Cultural Studies**

The thesis will be particularly useful for researchers who delve into the issues of conflict and contest in cities and multicultural societies.

### **Researchers in Social Psychology**

Given the rich interdisciplinary nature of the thesis and the introduction of the socio-spatial implications on identity concepts, this research offers a different dimension to identity constructions and will be insightful particularly for social psychologists.

### **Researchers in Human Geography**

The thesis offers some interesting perspectives on people and place relationships, providing a renewed understanding of place involvement experienced by people today based on humanist geography concepts.

Apart from the specialised audience, this thesis will be of interest to everyone with more than a passing interest in identity and place relationships in contemporary urban context.

*Part I*

# INTRODUCTION

*To be is to be in place—Casey*



# Chapter 1

# Identity and Place

## 1.1 Introduction

There is an increasing debate on the identity crises experienced by people today: the challenge for researchers lies in comprehending the multifarious factors involved in identity that makes it a complex domain of research. Discussing identity as a human need, the chapter explores the entanglements of place and identity. Rarely there are attempts made to study in depth, the reciprocal relationship between identity constructions and place, largely owing to the changing conceptions of place relationship and its inherent complexity. This chapter introduces the notion of identity from different disciplinary perspective to emphasise the socio-spatial aspect embedded in identity. It discusses the role of place in processes defining one's identity, and examines the changing notions of place in urban living today. Aiming to comprehend how place-relation defines identity construction, it brings to light the various implicit factors of place experiences that enable peoples' sense of identity. Drawing insights from different disciplines the discussion situates the concept of identity within the frame of the spatial realm. Identities suffer from definitional fuzziness, as sometimes this term is used to refer to the social category, sometimes to the character, and sometimes to the sexual core.<sup>5</sup> The chapter strives to develop a broader discussion of identity concepts in relation to the context: the physical environment. While examining the various concepts and definitions of identity, the goal is not to identify the best explanation but to comprehend the different perspectives offered by the disciplines and how these can inform the domain of place and identity relationship.

## 1.2 Identity : A Human Need

In the context of the contemporary urban environment, identity today is discussed on one hand from a view which mourns identity crises inflicted upon people by the impacts of globalisation, information and communication technologies that have pervaded all facets of human existence. On the other hand, debates and discussions are grounded in the potential of exploring the contemporary context for a renewed understanding of identity. Either way identity remains as a 'contested'<sup>6</sup> and complex concept, and is comprehended in multiple ways in different academic disciplines. Although important theories and concepts on identity have been developed by disciplines such as social and environmental psychology and anthropology, it largely remains ineffective for spatial disciplines due to the lack of importance ascribed to 'place' or physical

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<sup>5</sup> Ruthellen Josselson, "Identity and Relatedness in the Life Cycle."

<sup>6</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis and Erene Kaptani, "Performing Identities: Participatory Theatre among Refugees," in *Theorizing identities and social action*, ed. Margaret Wetherell (Houndmills, Basingstoke [etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 58.

settings. As philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty asserts, our existence is spatial,<sup>7</sup> and in contemporary urban living people experience different spatial dimensions—physical, mediated, virtual, augmented. Though the notions of place itself have been challenged and reconceptualised by these dimensions, place concepts become even more significant in understanding identity, as they impregnate our everyday practices more than ever.

Identity is a crucial aspect of people's lives and its significance is highlighted by developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, who explained that in extreme cases, the deprivation of one's identity can lead to murder. In psychoanalysis 'symptoms and behaviours are explained as being caused or motivated by a search for identity',<sup>8</sup> which allows individuals to orient themselves in the physical world. As Jeff Malpas explains, 'it is precisely the oriented and located character of any mode of being in the world that allows things to be in the world in the first place'.<sup>9</sup> According to architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'identification' and 'orientation' are the two psychological functions that remain fundamental for peoples' existence in the world. He explains how identification is the basis of peoples' sense of belonging, and how orientation is the function which enables them to move.<sup>10</sup> The two main aspects of orientation and identification are interrelated by the common thread of 'place': Norberg-Schulz states that to orient oneself is to know where one is and to identify is to know how one is 'in a certain place'.<sup>11</sup> Acknowledging the importance of orientation, he also stresses that to 'dwell' in this world, identification with the environment is mandatory. Identity is one of the fundamental human needs that enables meaningful anchoring of people to places, making it the central focus of scholarly debates and discussions in the present day: indeed, sociologist Anthony Giddens argues that the processes of social change that have taken place in the contemporary era have heightened people's sense of risk and anxiety.<sup>12</sup> Some of the impending challenges of addressing and understanding identity issues lie in the very complexity of the phenomenon itself, which is discussed in the next section.

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<sup>7</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 346.

<sup>8</sup> Graafama L.G Tobi, "Psychoanalysis," in *Identity and development: an interdisciplinary approach*, ed. Harke A Bosma et al. (Thousand Oaks, Calif. [u.a.: Sage Publ., 1994), 21–24, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Jeff Malpas, "Putting Space in Place: Philosophical Topography and Relational Geography," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30, no. 2 (2012): 226–42, 228.

<sup>10</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, "The Phenomenon of Place," in *Theorizing a new agenda for architecture: an anthology of architectural theory, 1965-1995*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 414–28.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 418.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

### 1.3 Identity concepts and complexities

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains the inherent difficulty and challenges of studying identity, as ‘the very concept we are dealing with—identity—[is] too complex, too under developed and too little understood in contemporary social sciences to be definitely tested’.<sup>13</sup> The main reason for this can be attributed to its ‘all-pervasive’<sup>14</sup> characteristic nature, embracing personal, social, psychological domains of understanding that makes it ‘unfathomable’.<sup>15</sup> In psychology, which may be considered as one of the core non-spatial disciplines which delves deeply into identity and offers various definitions of identity developed by diverse schools of thought, the essential element of the definition involves ‘the characteristics and distinctive features of a subject’.<sup>16</sup> This opens up a plethora of factors that may define and/or influence a subject, making it impossible to capture and study identity itself. Werff defines identity ‘as the combination of essential psychic qualities which characterize and differentiate the person’.<sup>17</sup> He distinguishes identity as objective and subjective, where the objective identity of a person includes the data pertaining to their name, date of birth and so on, and the subjective identity is the experiential side of the objective identity. What is referred here is the internal or the mental operatives and imageries of the individual.

Explanations of identity also contradict each other if we read between disciplines: while Werff describes the sense of identity as ‘the awareness of continuously being one and the same person distinct from all others’<sup>18</sup>, human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan explains ‘We all like to be special, yet at a deep level, being special or unique is intolerable. It makes for disconnectedness, loneliness, and vulnerability. Submerging the self in a group, thus escaping from one’s singularity, is a compelling human need’.<sup>19</sup> This difference in conceptualising identity largely arises due to the disciplinary perspective and the domain of emphasis involved. (Here the former comes from a psychological perspective that stresses the internal processing of human mind, while the latter is from human geographical perspective emphasising the socio-cultural response by individuals.) Identity definition also becomes fuzzy as scholars shift between personal and social identity. Sociologist

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<sup>13</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” in *Modernity and its futures*, ed. Anthony G McGrew and Stuart Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University, 1992), 273–326, 274.

<sup>14</sup> Erik H Erikson, *Identity, youth and crisis* (New York, N.Y.: Norton, 1968), 48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Harke A. Bosma et al., “Introduction,” in *Identity and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Harke A Bosma et al. (SAGE Publications, 1994), 1–20.

<sup>17</sup> J.J. van der Werff, *Identiteitsproblemen: zelfbeschouwing in de psychologie* (Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1985), 176.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 177.

<sup>19</sup> Yi-fu Tuan, *Escapism* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), XI.

Mike Michael states that 'it is this very definitional amorphousness that gives the concept of identity its resonance'.<sup>20</sup>

Moving the discussion towards seeing identity as a concept of being connected to the outer world, a different dimension was added to identity concepts from developmental psychology by Erikson, who explained that 'the conscious feeling of having a personal identity is based on two simultaneous observations: the perception of selfsameness and continuity of one's existence in time and space and the perception of the fact that others recognise one's sameness and continuity'.<sup>21</sup> The important addition which Erikson made is the social aspect, moving the internal domain to be connected to the external domain which is the wider socio-cultural context where the individual's gets the recognition of the 'sameness and continuity'. It can be implied that Erikson offers a definition where the interaction of individual and context is introduced, indicating the inherent sense of embeddedness of the person in his or her context. The relationship between the internal and external domain has been viewed in broadly three ways: the interior of the person's being as the source of sameness, cultural and socio psychological factors that limits how one appears to others, and interaction between psychological interior and the socio-cultural context.<sup>22</sup> Though the notions of context have been introduced to define one's identity in psychology, it has been confined to the psycho-social realm that included the socio-cultural aspects which are seldom linked to the physical aspects of the context. Interestingly, when dealing with the identity crisis associated with migration (both geographic and social migration), Tobi Graafsma explains it as a situation where 'one feels undecided about where to go' touching upon the physical context but then moving on, focussing on internal phenomenon as being 'hesitant or unable to commit oneself in important areas of life'.<sup>23</sup>

A closer relation of identity to the physical context was reported by developmental psychologist Jean Piaget: 'roots of identity are to be found in the complex involving "own body X body of another X permanent object"... derived from the functional unity of the changes between the subject and his physical and interpersonal surroundings'.<sup>24</sup> It can be noted here that not only is the significance of the interaction between the subject and the physical environment for identity made explicit, but it is also taken to the next level, indicating the importance of the changes in this interaction having an impact on identity itself.

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<sup>20</sup> Mike Michael, *Constructing Identities: The Social, the Nonhuman and Change* (SAGE, 1996), 7.

<sup>21</sup> Erikson, *Identity, youth and crisis*, 50.

<sup>22</sup> Grotevant et al., "Introduction."

<sup>23</sup> Tobi Graafsma, "A Psychoanalytic Perspective on the Concept of Identity," in *Identity and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Harke A Bosma et al. (SAGE Publications, 1994), 41-61, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Jean Piaget, *On the Development of Memory and Identity* (Clark University Press, 1968), 29.

From the historian's perspective, they more frequently study the concept of identity at the collective than at the individual level. Questions of national, cultural, ethnic, religious or class identities developed by particular groups at a certain point of time become important determinants of social and political behaviour.<sup>25</sup> In many ways the discourses on identity follow the evolution of socio, political and economic structures. This can be easily extended in space and time to a broad gamut of different questions of collective identity such as local, regional and national identity.

From a sociological point of view broadly 'identity is about difference; it's about marking out "us" and "them"'.<sup>26</sup> This demarcation between 'us' and 'them' is manifested through what Kath Woodward explains 'identity formation involves setting boundaries. These boundaries locate the parameters of difference and of sameness. Those with whom we share an identity are marked out as the same, in contrast to those who are different'.<sup>27</sup> Though boundaries are largely discussed to represent the socio-cultural realm, embedded implicitly in them are the notions of spatiality. For people who carry imprints of certain cultures, languages and histories their identities remain connected 'to culture and to place'.<sup>28</sup> Wendy Pullan, in her book *Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday*, highlights the spatial dynamics which are not recognised when addressing the conflicts of identity that are ethnic, national and religious, bringing to light how the physical context is inherently connected in manifesting and representing identity in the socio-cultural realm. Pullan states that 'in cities identities are overwhelmingly rendered and internalised in terms of "us and them", or "me, my people" and those people, the "other"',<sup>29</sup> emphasising the crucial role of urban spatial practices including the place-appropriation strategies of people to reinforce or negotiate identities impacting the conflict and contest.

The sociological domain marks identity as a concept emerging from and strongly linked to social relationships, where spatiality is seldom considered. Interestingly Lefebvre explains the very basis of social relationship being grounded in spatiality itself:

[W]hat exactly is the mode of existence of social relationships? The study of space offers an answer according to which the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they

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<sup>25</sup> Arthur Mitzman, "Historical Identity and Identity of the Historian," in *Identity and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Harke A Bosma et al. (SAGE Publications, 1994), 135–57.

<sup>26</sup> Kath Woodward, *Understanding identity* (London; New York: Arnold ; Distributed in the USA by Oxford University Press, 2002), VIII.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Stuart Hall, "New Culture for old," in *A place in the world?: places, cultures and globalization*, ed. Doreen Massey and P. M Jess (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Open University, 1995), 175–213, 178.

<sup>29</sup> Wendy Pullan and Britt Baillie, "Introduction," in *Locating urban conflicts ethnicity, nationalism and the everyday*, ed. Wendy Pullan and Britt Baillie (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1–13, 3.

have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing the space itself. Failing this the relations would remain in the realm of pure abstraction.<sup>30</sup>

From another perspective, Richard Steadman explains how place is important for the construction of social meanings as place itself is 'a meaning-based concept, with meanings derived from experience with the physical landscape, a fairly strong "social construction"'.<sup>31</sup>

From the above examples it can be understood that identity concepts in psychology and psychoanalysis referred largely to the core of the individual, while historical and sociological studies largely focus on the characteristic features of nations or ethnic groups that inform collective identity. Erikson's concept introduced the notion of individual being connected to the external which in fact represented the wider socio-cultural context. In this relational context identity is referred to the 'co regulation of core and context characteristics'.<sup>32</sup> From this perspective it became accepted in psychology that 'identity emerges not from the increasing separation and distinction from others but from the continually redefined capacity to make use of and respond to others.'<sup>33</sup> The most significant aspect emerging from the relational perspective of identity is the recognition that identity is at its core psychosocial: self and other: inner and outer: being and doing: expression of self for, with, against, or despite: but certainly in response to others.<sup>34</sup> This relational concept of identity provides useful points of departure to understand the significance of spatiality as considering the context more comprehensively including the socio-spatial realm, identity then can be recognised as being developed by the response to and interaction with the physical environment.

#### **1.4 Significance of space/place and identity relationship**

One of the key terms defined at the beginning of this thesis is space/place. In line with the definition offered earlier, the notion of space and place is discussed here in a more interchangeable meaning largely to emphasise the significance of the physical context in identity. Place/Physical settings have been largely considered as a muted backdrop in which events occur to be taken seriously in identity concepts. Philosopher Edward Casey laments 'nothing we do is

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<sup>30</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), 129.

<sup>31</sup> Richard C. Steadman, "Is It Really Just a Social Construction?: The Contribution of the Physical Environment to Sense of Place," *Society & Natural Resources* 16, no. 8 (2003): 671–685, doi:10.1080/08941920309189, 672.

<sup>32</sup> Ruthellen Josselson, "Identity and Relatedness in the Life Cycle," in *Identity and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Harke A Bosma et al. (SAGE Publications, 1994), 81–102, 91.

<sup>33</sup> Ruthellen Josselson, "Identity and Relatedness in the Life Cycle," 95.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 96.

unplaced and how could we fail to recognize this primal fact'.<sup>35</sup> Jeff Malpas goes further, to declare the importance of spatiality for studying any phenomenon as 'space must be the most fundamental concept in almost every domain'.<sup>36</sup> The very basis of existential meaning production itself is based on the peoples' interaction with the physical world: Christian Norberg Schulz described how 'these meanings and structures are reflections of man's understanding of the natural environment and his existential situation in general'.<sup>37</sup>

With reference to identity and place, Norberg-Schulz explains further how identity is so inherent in place that people unselfconsciously incorporate the notion in linguistic usage. He states that:

When a person wants to tell who he is, it is in fact usual to say: 'I am a New Yorker', or 'I am a Roman'. This means something much more concrete than to say: 'I am an architect', or perhaps: 'I am an optimist'. We understand that human identity is to a high extent a function of places and things. It is therefore not only important that our environment has a spatial structure which facilitates orientation, but also that it consists of concrete objects of identification. Human identity presupposes the identity of place.<sup>38</sup>

Notions of places are also embedded in different levels of identity itself, and geographer Edward Relph points out how it is important to consider John Donat's statement when trying to understand places: 'places occurs at all levels of identity, my place, your place, street, community, town, country, region, country and continent, but places never conform to tidy hierarchies of classification. They all overlap and interpenetrate one another and are wide open to a variety of interpretation'.<sup>39</sup> A place opens up to an individual to be experienced through multisensory perceptions that are visual, acoustic, olfactory, tasted and haptic. Places involve the whole set of physical, perceptual, cognitive, psychological and social experiences, without which it is difficult to comprehend any human related concepts. This was stated more objectively by environmental psychologists:

It should be apparent that at the level of human interaction in any given social setting for any purpose, the individual responds not to a diffusion of proximal and distal light and sound waves, shapes and structures, objects and spaces, but to *another person*, engaged in a specific *activity* in a specific *place* for a specific *purpose*. Physical settings—simple or complex—evoke complex human responses in the form of feelings, attitudes, values, expectancies, and desires and it is in this sense

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<sup>35</sup> Edward S Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, New Ed (University of California Press, 1998), IX.

<sup>36</sup> Malpas, "Putting Space in Place." 227.

<sup>37</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci : Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), 50.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, Research in Planning and Design 1 (London: Pion, 1976), 30.

as well as in their known physical properties that their relationship to human experience and behaviour must be understood.<sup>40</sup>

The above description provides evidence of how the strong interrelationship between people, place and activities, and asserts the crucial role of physical settings in understanding any phenomenon pertaining to peoples' experience, development and in this case, identity. It explains how any place, regardless of any strong characteristics or qualities, enables human responses. This invariably develops a relationship consciously and unconsciously between people and place that is transactional in nature. Social psychologist Irwin Altman explains that there are three general ways to relate the physical environment to social relationships and psychological processes: a.) as an independent variable in which aspects of the environment affect or cause variations in interpersonal processes; b.) as an aspect of behaviour, for example, use of space, personal spacing, territorial behaviour, use of the environment to regulate privacy, possession and display of prized objects, decorating or personalizing places and so on; and c.) as a context or setting within which psychological processes, relationships and behaviours are embedded.<sup>41</sup> The third aspect Altman considers as superior, as the physical environment becomes 'part of the definition and meaning of the phenomenon'<sup>42</sup> occurring where place and people interact, developing a transactional relationship. The quality of such relation remains crucial, as Robert Gifford explains: 'every aspect of human existences occurs in one environment or another and the transactions with and within them has important consequences both for people and their natural and built worlds':<sup>43</sup> it is through such transactions that people develop a sense of identity.

Several studies in environmental psychology have discussed different levels in which identity and place relationships can be understood. Place-identity is one of the frequently discussed concepts linking place and identity, and is important in understanding identity, as Proshansky et al. explain that it is 'another aspect of identity comparable to social identity which describes the person's socialization with the physical world'.<sup>44</sup> Gifford explains that place identity 'develops when individuals experience similarities between self and place and incorporate cognitions about the physical environment (memories, thoughts, values, preferences, and categorizations) into their

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<sup>40</sup> Harold M. Proshansky, William H Ittelson, and Leanne G Rivlin, "The Influence of the Physical Environment on Behavior: Some Basic Assumptions," in *Environmental Psychology: Man and His Physical Setting*, ed. Harold M. Proshansky, William H Ittelson, and Leanne G Rivlin (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 27–36, 28.

<sup>41</sup> Irwin Altman, "A Transactional Perspective on Transitions to New Environments," *Environment and Behavior* 24, no. 2 (March 1, 1992): 268–80, 269.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Gifford, "Environmental Psychology Matters," *Annual Review of Psychology* 65, no. 1 (2014): 541–79, 545.

<sup>44</sup> Proshansky, Ittelson, and Rivlin, "The Influence of the Physical Environment on Behavior: Some Basic Assumptions," 32.



self-definitions'.<sup>45</sup> Twigger-Ross and Uzzell highlight how several studies use the concept of place attachment and place identity but seldom discuss clearly the relationship between place and identity. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell summarised the two ways in which place and identity were related in existing literature; place identifications and place identity. Place identification is explained as the 'membership of a group of people who are defined by location'<sup>46</sup>, and from this perspective Twigger-Ross and Uzzell consider 'place identification is a type of social identification'<sup>47</sup>, arguing that in this way social identity approach makes place as being contained into social identity which by itself can only partially explain the relationship between identity and environment. Apart from place being inherent in identity concepts, their argument emphasises the primacy of place in understanding identity itself as Twigger-Ross and Uzzell place identity is 'a radical re-evaluation of the construct of identity'<sup>48</sup>.

Osretis Droseltis and Vivian Vignoles, reviewing the vast literature place and identity studies, identified four main conceptualisations of this relationship: self-extension, environmental fit, place-self congruity and emotional attachment.<sup>49</sup> They explained self-extension as the cognitive sense of place as being part of the extended self-concept. The second conception, environmental fit, refers to ecological/environmental sense of the self as fitting into or belonging to a place, which mainly revolves around the sense of belonging or being part of a place subjectively. Place-self congruity involves the notion that 'a place is similar to, or consistent with, the image one has of one's characteristics as an individual'.<sup>50</sup> Finally, emotional attachment embraces the concepts of emotional bonding developed by humanistic geographers and social anthropologists, and particularly emphasises the positive affect towards place. All these four axes identified about place and self reveal their relationship occurring at various levels of experience and reinforces its significance. It is important to note here that this very multidimensionality of place experiences which Relph indicates, though an essential quality in experiencing places, also challenges the understanding of place concepts. It can be inferred that for the same reasons it also poses difficulties in comprehending related identity concepts. Nevertheless, place and identity remain intertwined and interrelated at various scales of experiences.

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<sup>45</sup> Gifford, "Environmental Psychology Matters," 562.

<sup>46</sup> Clare L Twigger-Ross and David L Uzzell, "Place and Identity Processes," *Academic Press Ltd, Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 1996, 205–20.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>49</sup> Orestis Droseltis and Vivian L. Vignoles, "Towards an Integrative Model of Place Identification: Dimensionality and Predictors of Intrapersonal-level Place Preferences," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no. 1 (March 2010): 23–34, doi:10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.05.006.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

Work in human geography, especially that by Relph and Tuan, has revealed the deeper understanding of the sense of connectedness through place experiences. Relph argues that 'events and actions are significant only in the context of certain place, and are coloured and influenced by the character of those places even as they contribute to that character'.<sup>51</sup> According to Relph places are incorporated into all the intentional structures of all human consciousness and human intention, self-conscious or unselfconscious, should not be understood simply in terms of deliberately chosen direction or purpose, but as a relationship of being between humans and the world that gives meaning. This conception of place emphasizes how a non-spatial understanding of identity clearly misses out the essence of human experiences that define identities: as Relph states, 'places are basic elements in the ordering of our experience'<sup>52</sup>, and place associations are central in understanding identity as they become the 'point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world'.<sup>53</sup> Tuan coined the term 'topophilia' to refer to the 'affective bond between people and place or setting. It is not the strongest of human emotions. When it is compelling we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol'.<sup>54</sup>

Places are powerful in evoking deeper experiences both consciously and unconsciously: such experiences are comparable to what Abraham Maslow refers to as 'peak-experiences'.<sup>55</sup> The characteristic nature of peak experiences which Maslow describes are; integrated feeling, spontaneity, creative, ease of functioning, positive etc.<sup>56</sup> Referring back to Droseltis and Vignoles' four part conceptualisation involves place experiences where the notions of self are harmoniously integrated into different dimensions, creating a sense of orientation, belonging and positive feelings (of relaxation, comfort, stimulation etc), it can be implied that place possess the potential for enabling peak experiences and 'people in peak experiences are most their identities, closest to their real selves, most idiosyncratic'.<sup>57</sup>

Similar ideas on the experiences of people which are intimate with places are described by Gaston Bachelard with reference to place memories and associated experiences. Bachelard offers a poetic image to the individual's experiences which he argues are strongly fixed in the human mind. He

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Yi-fu Tuan, *Topophilia : a Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. ; London: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 4.

<sup>55</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, "Peak-Experiences as Acute Identity-Experiences," in *The Self in Social Interaction: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Chad Gordon and Kenneth J. Gergen (J. Wiley, 1968), 275–280.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 278.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 279.

explains that one can identify 'a placeness in the psyche' grounding his arguments in the experiences of one's house which is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind'.<sup>58</sup> According to Bachelard, in order to analyse our being more deeply, it is crucial to understand the experiential plane of the daydreams evoked by places which are identified with one's solitude. This shows the highest level of intimacy which one's self attains with place relationships. Extending the significance of this individual-place intimacy Bachelard coined the term 'topoanalysis', which is a 'systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives',<sup>59</sup> and suggested that this would be supportive for psychoanalysis. Again, we see how the place and identity relationship is transactional, intimate and reciprocal in nature. As people act upon a place, reflecting their self through their activities, engagement and meaning making, David Ley states 'place acts back on man'<sup>60</sup> by reassuring their sense of identity through representations of meanings manifested in the physical environment, or offering new opportunities to reconstruct identity through negotiations of meanings, or constructing new meanings from the existing ones.

From the standpoint of the 'I' extending his or her self into the physical world, there is a constant process of negotiation with the biological, social and experiential information encountered. In this complex process, there exists a consistent spatial experience which plays the foreground/background, having an impact on the ways and means with which one relates one's self with the environment. Our existence is always in relation with things in the physical world, a spatial relation which is fundamental for all our experiences. Norberg-Schulz points out that 'any activity has spatial aspects, because any activity implies movements and relations to places', but often this spatiality of our existence is so obvious that it becomes almost invisible in our everyday living. Similarly, Proshansky stated that physical cognitive structures are more complex than social and personal cognitive structures: being subtle they tend to be remote from the awareness of the individual, because physical settings are "backdrops" against which events occur.<sup>61</sup> Largely, 'spatiality tends to be peripheralized into the background as reflection, container, stage, environment, or external constraint of human behaviour and social action'.<sup>62</sup> Comprehending identity without considering spatiality compromises the essential component of identity

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<sup>58</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>60</sup> David Ley, "Social Geography and Social Action," in *The spaces of postmodernity: readings in human geography*, ed. M. J Dear and Steven Flusty (Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 74.

<sup>61</sup> Harold M. Proshansky, Leanne G Rivlin, and William H Ittelson, *Environmental psychology : man and his physical setting* (New York ; London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970).

<sup>62</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace : Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass. ; Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 71.

conceptualisation. It is important to note that any narrative which ignores the spatial dimension is incomplete and is in danger of oversimplifying the understanding of our experiences.<sup>63</sup>

## 1.5 Conclusion

This chapter explained the concept of identity from various disciplinary perspectives, including psychology, psychoanalysis, social psychology and history. The various definitions of identity introduced here have highlighted the inherent relationship between identity and physical context which are frequently overlooked or neglected due to the disciplinary boundaries and/or the complexity of comprehending place and identity concepts. The chapter addressed such shortcomings by delineating the ideas from diverse disciplines that do link place and identity, throwing light on the importance of addressing identity concepts from a socio-spatial perspective. The chapter is significant in providing the foundation for this research, as it establishes the role and power of place experiences in people's identity construction, throwing light on the potential of an interdisciplinary perspective in understanding identity phenomenon. The discussion of this chapter was focussed primarily on tracing the place-identity relationship and serves as an important starting point for understanding the changing perception of place and identity which is delineated in the next chapter. More than arguing the significance of place experiences in identity construction, the discussion in this chapter suggests the potential way of using multiple layers of 'place' as a lens in understanding identity and enabling people's emplacements in the urban environment today, and supports this research in anchoring the identity phenomenon to place experiences.

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<sup>63</sup> Edward W Soja, *Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory* (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 22.

## Chapter 2

## Urban Complexities

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects on the conditions of contemporary urban living and how they influence the general perception of people today, as this in turn has an impact on the place-identity relationship.<sup>64</sup> While the previous chapter introduced changing place relationships, discussion here is developed from the larger context of increasing multiculturalism and its impact on the identity of people. A more detailed description of the narrowed-down research context is explained in Chapter 5. The discussion here moves on to the pervading technological impact on place relationship and is extended and focused on three main changing conceptions: space / place, identity and culture in the contemporary urban environment, all of which pose challenges for architecture in addressing the issue of identity crisis. The chapter delves into urban spatial practices and complexities in this globalised era and presents the various notions attached in understanding them and how they might affect architectural design thinking. The aim of the chapter is to establish the larger context in which this research is grounded and throws light on how, based on conceptions, identity is approached in this research considering the factors that connect contemporary place experiences and identity construction

### 2.2 Multiculturalism

#### 2.2.1 Globalisation

Globalisation seldom allows anything happening in this world to be limited to a local event: according to Ulrich Beck, 'all interventions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world and we must reorient and reorganize our lives and actions, our organizations and institutions, along a "local-global" axis'.<sup>65</sup> Broadly speaking, the impact of globalisation on society is dualistic in nature; on one hand it is debated for the demands for unprecedented changes it brings forth to the local, while on the other it is discussed as an abstract concept, as 'local is no longer a sign of withdrawal from the global but an essential node concretising a rhizomatic network'.<sup>66</sup> In terms of its cultural impact, again on one hand the debate emphasises 'homogenisation'<sup>67</sup> and on the

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<sup>64</sup> Part of this chapter has been published as a paper :Lakshmi Priya Rajendran, Stephen Walker, and Rosie Parnell, "Identity Negotiations: Architectural Design Challenges in Multi-cultural Urban Environment," *Architecture & Environment* 2, no. 1 (2014): 1, doi:10.12966/ae.01.01.2014.

<sup>65</sup> Ulrich Beck, *What Is Globalization?*, New Ed (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).11-12

<sup>66</sup> Rob Shields, "Entangled Places, Interface Buildings, Generic Design," in *Buildings, Culture and Environment: Informing Local and Global Practices*, ed. Richard Lorch and Raymond J. Cole, 1st ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 18-36, 19

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 22.

other 'hybridisation'.<sup>68</sup> This dualism in a way has contributed in developing a plethora of definitions and explanations that have been put forth by various scholars to understand the spectrum of globalisation, as Peter Berger explains:

Globalisation consists of multiple processes by which people in one society become culturally, economically, politically, socially, informationally, strategically, epidemiologically and ecologically closer to people in geographically distant societies.<sup>69</sup>

As we can understand from Berger's description above, not only is the distance *within* societies reducing, but so is that *between* societies, which introduces the challenge of creating environments for negotiating differences that occur as result of these reductions. One of the definitions of globalisation which will be of particular interest to this discussion is given by Malcolm Waters as follows:

[Globalisation is] a social process in which constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and in which people act accordingly.<sup>70</sup>

Waters' definition is highly relevant for two reasons. Firstly, it clearly states that people are aware of both on-going and impending changes that have an impact on all facets of their existence. This also implies that people are in a way equipped to encounter the implications of globalisation. Secondly, it underlines the developing anticipation of people to accommodate and adapt to these inevitable changes. Exploring these conditions can open interesting perspectives and approaches for architects to respond to the urban transformations which cause uncertainty in people to act and relate to their physical environment.

Moving the discussion more towards the changing conception of spatial relations, several theories have emerged largely to address the global impact on spatial practices and the perception of the physical environment. Relevant to this discussion is Doreen Massey's global sense of place,<sup>71</sup> which argues that this geography of changing social relations allows for a different interpretations of a place and an extroverted sense of place that 'integrates in a positive way the global and the local'.<sup>72</sup> This notion echoes as a response towards understanding the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>69</sup> Peter L Berger, "The Cultural Dynamics of Globalisation," in *Many globalizations: cultural diversity in the contemporary world*, ed. Peter L Berger and Samuel P Huntington (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).1

<sup>70</sup> Malcolm Waters, *Globalization*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000).5

<sup>71</sup> Doreen B Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," *Marxism Today*, 1991, 24–29.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 26.

growing debate on the increasing 'sense of dislocation'<sup>73</sup> which people are encountering with the 'succession of cultural imports'<sup>74</sup> that dynamically change places and the way people relate to them. When multiple new urban forms emerge through these diversities, Constantin Petcou notes that conflictual relationships are avoided, as the present context enables people to find new situations for re-defining their identity.<sup>75</sup> Petcou explains that at this point there is an emergence of 'extra-territorialisation',<sup>76</sup> a state in which identity is evolved within an empty context without any reference or territoriality. He emphasises that this extra-territoriality manifests itself more obviously within the contemporary cultural territoriality than existing built environments. As people tend to live amidst sense of anonymity, being connected with their family and professional network through technology, Petcou identifies people's existence occurring in two extra-territorial directions: 'One towards the anonymous local and other towards the abstract global'. He concludes by saying that though this extra-territoriality remains open to the emergence of other types of territoriality, our societies would probably end up being multi-territorial in nature.<sup>77</sup>

There are two other significant schools of thought which have been identified to comprehend urban spatial complexities: the 'political and symbolic economy'.<sup>78</sup> The political economy emphasises how investment shifts among different circuits of capital that transfer the ownership and uses of land from one social class to another, while the symbolic economy focuses on the representations of social groups and visual means of excluding or including them in public and private spaces. With increasing urban agglomeration, both these schools of thought have become more important when studying the urban environment, which is also the reason why 'the most productive analyses of cities in recent years are based on interpretations and interpenetrations of culture and power'.<sup>79</sup>

The complexity of existing spatiality in the contemporary context is evidenced through these various spatial concepts and theories developed by scholars to comprehend the dynamics of socio-cultural and spatial relationships. The above discussion presented some of the prominent notions developed for understanding the changing social and spatial situations in contemporary

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>75</sup> Constantin Petcou, "Media-polis/media-city," in *The Hieroglyphics of space : reading and experiencing the modern metropolis*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 2002), 282–288.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 284.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 285.

<sup>78</sup> Sharon Zukin, "Space and Symbols in an Age of Decline," in *Re-Representing the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the Twenty-First Century Metropolis*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: NYU Press, 1996), 43–59.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 43.

context. All of them play a crucial role in defining and designing the urban environment today, as Sharon Zukin describes how the 'ambiguity of urban forms is a source of the city's tension as well as a struggle for interpretation',<sup>80</sup> hence it becomes important for architects and designers to address them. Further discussion in this chapter focuses specifically on issues and impacts of multiculturalism in cities for the reason that it has emerged as a central issue in identity construction, redefining peoples' social and spatial practices.

### **2.2.2 Multiculturalism and Identity**

One of the significant impacts of globalisation is the advent of multiculturalism that can be read as a characteristic feature of urban environments today. Interestingly, multiculturalism is both a global phenomenon and 'a common experience at the level of individual consumption'<sup>81</sup> of food, music, craft objects and much more. Recently it has received lot of attention amongst social scientists and cultural theorists, as with increasing cultural differences and several associated issues, as Eminine Onaran Incirlioglu and Zerrin G Tandogan mention 'social cohesion often proves to be difficult to achieve'.<sup>82</sup> As 'culture is a major factor in one's behaviour',<sup>83</sup> negotiating differences turns into a restless and complex activity often marked by discordant situations for identity constructions. Identity had always been an essential element in human society but in the contemporary multicultural context 'it has become increasingly fragmented and contested taking on an enhanced political and social dimension'.<sup>84</sup>

Alongside the fragmentation of the socio-cultural fabric, sociologist Saskia Sassen points out the emergence of two extreme modes of appropriation of places in cities that is demonstrated by the corporate services complex and the immigrant community. Sassen explains that the urban form represented by the global city is the internationalised corporate services complex and its highly paid professional workforce with its high-priced lifestyle, which is thought to constitute the essence of an advanced post-industrial economy. In contrast, the urban form representative of an immigrant community is habitually seen as not belonging to an advanced economy, but is to be found there only because it is imported due to the mobility of such communities. These two

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>81</sup> Franco Bianchini, "Cultural Planning for Urban Sustainability," in *City and culture : cultural processes and urban sustainability*, ed. Louise Nyström (Stockholm: Swedish Urban Environment Council, 1999), 34–51.

<sup>82</sup> Eminine Onaran Incirlioglu and Zerrin G Tandogan, "Cultural Diversity, Public Space, Aesthetics, and Power," in *City and culture : cultural processes and urban sustainability*, ed. Louise Nyström (Stockholm: Swedish Urban Environment Council, 1999), 34–51.

<sup>83</sup> John Douglas Porteous, *Environment & behavior : planning and everyday urban life* (Reading, Mass; London etc: Addison-Wesley, 1977).143.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Adam, *The globalisation of modern architecture : the impact of politics, economics and social change on architecture and urban design since 1900* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 206.



modes, manifest as two emphatic 'socio-physical forms, are increasingly evident in more and more major cities'.<sup>85</sup> Multiculturalism inscribes differences at socio-cultural, economic and political levels, which become spatially manifest, and transform the urban environment as places for contestation and/or negotiation.

Though at conceptual level multiculturalism brings cultures closer to one another, it also instigates isolating and conflicting societal attitudes. The cultural differences mark out territoriality-specific traditions and ways of life which are reflected in diverse behaviour patterns and, at times, in intercultural tension and conflict.<sup>86</sup> At the broadest level, sociologist and planner Xavier de Souza Briggs presents three factors that 'define these diversities most deeply and consistently'<sup>87</sup> which he labels as boundary shift, tolerance, and cross-cutting differences.<sup>88</sup> Boundary shift is considered as the basic social tool for dealing with differences which stem from how communities shift boundaries largely through assimilation 'by turning outsiders into insiders'<sup>89</sup> when there is a need and opportunity to share specific places. Tolerance encompasses attitudes and behaviours which allow co-existence. Finally cross-cutting loyalty is understood as a by-product of the first two, and de Souza Briggs explains how these involve 'decisions to cooperate that are not simple functions of tolerance but of multiple group identities and loyalties that hold each other in check'.<sup>90</sup>

Architecture today is compelled to deal carefully with these factors, which can be easily transposed as 'social tools for making diversities work'.<sup>91</sup> In such a socio-culturally transformed environment, architecture has a significant part to play, not 'merely because buildings constitute [a] large part of man's daily surroundings; but because architecture reflects and focuses such a wide variety of social facts'.<sup>92</sup> It is for this same reason that architecture bears the huge responsibility of designing for a multi-cultural spatiality that not only can strengthen the distinctive cultural identity of various groups, but also enables inclusiveness and integration into society more broadly. While the main challenge of architecture lies in achieving this together, the

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<sup>85</sup> Saskia Sassen, "Rebuilding the Global City," in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the Twenty-First Century Metropolis*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: NYU Press, 1996), 23–42.

<sup>86</sup> Carlos Alonso Zaldívar and Manuel Castells, *España Fin De Siglo* (Madrid: Alianza Ed., 1992).

<sup>87</sup> Xavier de Souza Briggs, "The Multicultural city in the Age of Networks," in *The network society: a new context for planning*, ed. Louis Albrechts and J Seymour Mandelbaum (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 211–21, 216.

<sup>88</sup> "Civilization in Color: The Multicultural City in Three Millennia," *Blackwell Publishing, Inc., City & Community*, 3, no. 4 (n.d.): 311–42, doi:10.1111/j.1535-6841.2004.00091.x.

<sup>89</sup> Briggs, "The Multicultural city in the Age of Networks." 217.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 218.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 218.

<sup>92</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The culture of cities*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970), 148.

various associated issues are discussed below. With 'hybrid identities providing significant challenges for [the] construction of communities',<sup>93</sup> it is imperative to develop tools that can bring design solutions for integrated urban environments. In employing these tools effectively, the challenge lies in carefully developing spatial interpretations that can facilitate in the architectural design thinking and process. In this light, the research methods used in this study which embrace the social and spatial aspects of identity constructions can be potentially developed into design research methods for studying and or designing integrated urban environment.

### 2.2.3 Changing conception of Culture as dynamic and hybrid

In the initial section on multiculturalism from one of the seminal works on architecture and culture, architectural historian and theorist K. Michael Hays notes 'architecture as an instrument of culture'<sup>94</sup> and culture as a 'cause and content of built form',<sup>95</sup> arguing explicitly for the profound relationship between them. Culture in itself is a multi-faceted concept that embraces everything from abstract principles of how to view the world to more concrete actions of behaving and relating to the environment.<sup>96</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, known as the founder of social anthropology, comprehensively explained this as follows: 'Culture comprises inherited artefacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values'.<sup>97</sup>

From both Malinowski's all-encompassing point of view and Hays' specificity, culture is clearly linked to physical settings and the characteristic nature of this relation might be tangible or intangible. For instance, the new electronic communication system characterized by its global reach and potential interactivity is changing cultures with increasing rapidity, which in turn has a great impact on the way people respond, interact and engage with their physical settings. The significant interrelationship between culture and physical settings has been affected due to the inevitable transformations caused by the dynamic process of cultural change due to globalisation and its consequent impact on spatial practices. In this context, ideally, the role of architecture is to offer a much needed cultural buffer, which can accommodate the changes for spatial negotiations that result from the emergence of new cultural patterns that restructure, reconstitute and reconstructs identities. These emergent cultural patterns are the organised

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<sup>93</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, 2Rev Ed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).253

<sup>94</sup> Michael K Hays, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form," *The MIT Press, Perspecta*, Vol. 21 (1984): 14–29.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>96</sup> Irwin Altman and Martin M Chemers, *Culture and environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).4

<sup>97</sup> Audrey I Richards, "Culture in Malinowski's work," in *Man and culture : an evaluation of the work of Bronislaw Malinowski*, ed. Raymond Firth (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 15–31.46

systems of significant symbols without which 'man's behaviour would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless'.<sup>98</sup>

Today, different cultures have been brought together as never before, which is why one cannot deny the fact that 'our relationship with our cultural identity has become increasingly complex'.<sup>99</sup> The rapid increase in the degree of cultural heterogeneity in cities that has been ignored by architects and urban designers overlooking heterogeneity as a potential means to understand and disentangling the spatial complexities. This condition of cultural heterogeneity is often projected and labelled as an alien concept in urban context that restricts any opportunities for distinctive cultural and spatial expressions. Instead of exploring the increasing cultural diversity for its potentiality in developing creative design solutions, architects' tendency is frequently to homogenize the environment leaving no scope for any interaction between diverse forms of cultural expression. The political philosopher John Gray explains the consequences of such action:

The reactionary project of rolling back this diversity of values and world-views in the pursuit of lost cultural unity overlooks the character of our cultural inheritance as a palimpsest, having ever deeper layers of complexity.<sup>100</sup>

Hence the very essence of culture lies in its ability to enable creative interactions within the diversity of an increasingly changing population, which is often overlooked in design thinking when addressing parochially the issues of contest and conflict. Acknowledging the complexity of the multi-cultural spatial concept, the need now is to realise the potential for developing the 'constraint' of increased heterogeneity as an ideal platform for the emergence of new hybrid cultural connotations. These hybrid connotations in turn enable urban environments to accommodate, recreate and/or redefine cultural identification, emplacing people within their socio-cultural context.

Cultural geographer Kevin Robin argues that the issues of cultural identities need to be seen in the context of cultural relationships, as identity might be obscured in isolation without others.<sup>101</sup> Robin contends that when identities are considered in terms of the experience of relationships, interaction due to cultural diversity can open new experiences where it will be possible to confront and modify more basic cultural emotions and to recognize the other as a culture apart,

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<sup>98</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New edition (New York: Basic Books, 1977).45-46

<sup>99</sup> Adam, *The globalisation of modern architecture*. 204

<sup>100</sup> John Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2007).109.

<sup>101</sup> Kevin Robins, "Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe," in *Questions of cultural identity*, ed. Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1996), 61-86.

not as a projection or extension of one's own culture. In this way, culture emerges as a dynamic social tool that manifests through architecture, amongst other things, enabling people to negotiate diversity through spatial practices.

Cultural systems have always been created by people, which imply that they 'are never fixed and static, but are constantly being rejigged, reinterpreted and indeed reinvented'.<sup>102</sup> In this sense, the processes of cultural change becomes 'a mark of human creativity'<sup>103</sup> and hence enables a more progressive outlook towards comprehending its impact on societies. While multiculturalism presents challenges in spatial understandings of the differences 'people will continue to appropriate, creolise and celebrate hybridisation demanding opportunities to participate in flows of cultural and economic resources from and to other places, diverting and applying them to meet their own ambitions'.<sup>104</sup> We need to realise that 'cultural pluralism is (and always has been) a routine feature of human social organisation'<sup>105</sup> which suggest negotiating with different cultural codes and inscribing one's identity through that process is a part of our cultural existence. Salman Rushdie rightly questions this: 'Do cultures actually exist as separate, pure, defensible entities? Is not melange, adulteration, impurity, pick'n'mix at the heart of the idea of the modern?'<sup>106</sup> In situations where this leads to some stability of identity amidst alienation or unstable conditions, societies may adapt their changed circumstances to create new hybrid cultural forms that gives them a sense of reassurance.<sup>107</sup> These hybrid cultural forms will interact with each other consistently and become a potential source for developing new symbolic meanings which are instrumental for overcoming the fragmentation so often observed in contemporary societies. Castells explains how 'a kaleidoscope of variable content depending on demand, thus reproducing cultural and personal diversity rather than over imposing a common set of values... the fragmented metropolis and the individualization of communication reinforce each other to produce an endless constellation of cultural subsets'<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Roger Ballard, "Race, Ethnicity and Culture," in *New Directions in Sociology*, ed. Martin Holborn (Ormskirk: The Causeway Press, 2002), 93 – 124.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>104</sup> Shields, "Entangled Places, Interface Buildings, Generic Design.", 17.

<sup>105</sup> Ballard, "Race, Ethnicity and Culture", 98.

<sup>106</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary homelands: essays and criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta in association with Penguin, 1992).394

<sup>107</sup> Adam, *The globalisation of modern architecture*. 205

<sup>108</sup> Manuel Castells, "Space of flows, space of places: materials for a theory of urbanism in the information age," in *Rethinking technology: a reader in architectural theory*, ed. William W Braham and Jonathan A Hale (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 440–56, 445.

## 2.3 Urban Living and technology : Changing conception of place-relations

...making himself unfamiliar with the immediate area lining his walk... [t]he solitary pedestrian will perhaps, one day, wind up completely neglecting the life around him, so close to hand as he rambles along, and become instead completely engrossed in the collective imagination of an audio visible 'far-away land' that will satisfy his expectation to the detriment of any actual encounter.<sup>109</sup>

Paul Virillio's observations here suggest how the technological revolution can become comfortably transposed to a state of meaningless excessiveness where everything about the world unfolds in the form of 'information', regardless of how much or how often one needs such information, while simultaneously distancing us from the essence of experiencing that same world. This excessiveness offered by technology is willingly accommodated and absorbed, along with its repercussions as a part urban living, and has slowly yet steadily acquired the power to (re)define our relationship with the physical world. One can also be sympathetic to the fact that, in the twenty-first century, people have been denied the choice of not being technological, as urban dwellers cannot survive without the present technological environments and structures<sup>110</sup> as they are leading us to a state of comfort and convenience which is impossible to ignore. Often what is overlooked is the 'obscenity' created, which Jean Baudrillard has referred to as a condition where there is no more spectacle, no more stage, no more theatre, no more illusion, when everything becomes immediately transparent, visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication.<sup>111</sup> Amidst this obscenity, rich experiential understanding seldom becomes a pursuit in our everyday urban existence. 'Meaning today "implodes" in this delirious proliferation of information,'<sup>112</sup> which has conditioned our sensory ability to perceive things largely for what they are not. The essentials of real experience always remains elusive as 'information' makes the representation of reality mean more than the reality itself.

In addition, the forever shrinking quality of time today has allowed the experiences of space and time to become fused, and we witness what David Harvey has referred to as a distinct reversal of two dimensions —a temporalisation of space and spatialisation of time.<sup>113</sup> The acceleration of

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<sup>109</sup> Paul Virillio, *University of Disaster* (Polity Press, 2009), 98.

<sup>110</sup> Koert van Mensvoort and Hendrik-Jan Grievink, *Next nature* (Barcelona: Actar, 2011), 148.

<sup>111</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, trans. Bernard Schütze and Caroline Schütze (Semiotext(e), 1988): 21-22.

<sup>112</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (University of Michigan Press, 1994), 79.

<sup>113</sup> David Harvey, *The condition of postmodernity : an enquiry into the origins of cultural change* (Cambridge, Mass ; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 147.

technology has allowed speed to become a primal dimension that defies all temporal and physical measurements.<sup>114</sup> Virillio's *Polar Inertia* argues that the 'extreme violence' of speed leads postmodern visual culture to an impasse, as it merely abandons the living in favour of the void and rapidity.<sup>115</sup> Severing our connections with real world experiences, these technologies offer a pseudo-virtual centre for the alienated self to anchor itself to, as 'everyone seems to be in the centre because everyone is close to one another'<sup>116</sup>, what Edward Casey describes as a kind of superficial intimacy created through feeling of 'virtual co-impacement'.<sup>117</sup>

Throughout history and across cultures, studies of human settlements demonstrate the subconscious need for the reflection of the self in the environment one inhabits, either symbolically or physically. Present technological interfaces of urban living have arguably overpowered our need for identifying self with the physical environment, as they have redefined our connections with the physical world. Though technological progress has been acknowledged by some as carrying an existential risk,<sup>118</sup> this research is inclined towards its impact on the person-environment relationship and how that influences or affects the identity construction in urban environment. If the product of today's person/machine interface is also the product of person/environment face-to-face encounters,<sup>119</sup> then this clearly underlines the role of architecture as a discipline in transforming people and place relationships, as well as the need for architecture to acknowledge the changing dimensions of this relationship.

The concept of static architecture has now been superseded by the rise of technologies that have created indefinite thrill and amusement that largely limits deeper experiences to emerge as a part of everyday encounters with our environment, as on one hand, most of the designed environment today suffers from what Edward Relph refers to as 'stuffing one's own genius into somebody else's loci',<sup>120</sup> while on the other hand there is no place for these undefined *ordinary places* in the present urban context. As cities become products and are marketed for their attractive urban imagery,<sup>121</sup> physical settings are seen more like objects and locations of convenience and comfort

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<sup>114</sup> Paul Virilio, *Lost dimension* (Semiotext(e), 2012),35.

<sup>115</sup> Paul Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2001), 76.

<sup>116</sup> Duncan J. Watts, *Small Worlds: The Dynamics of Networks Between Order and Randomness* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 146.

<sup>117</sup> Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, New Ed (University of California Press, 1998), XIV.

<sup>118</sup> Daniel Daou, "The End of Civilization," *SA+P Press, Threshold*, 40 (2012): 245-54.

<sup>119</sup> Paul Virilio, *Lost dimension*, 155.

<sup>120</sup> Relph, Edward, "The Instant Environment Machine and the Reclamation of Place," in *Place and Place Making Conference* (Melbourne, Australia, 1985).

<sup>121</sup> Stephen Graham, *Telecommunications and the City: Electronic Spaces, Urban Places* (London: Routledge, 1996), 179.

rather than as possessing restorative qualities and abilities to unselfconsciously accommodate the inscription of one's self amidst disorientation and displacement.

place has become less about our origins on some singular piece of blood soil, and more about forming connections with the many sites in our lives. Place become less an absolute location fraught with tribal bonds or nostalgia, and more a relative state of mind that one gets into by playing one's boundaries and networks. We belong to several places and communities, partially by degree, and in ways that are mediated.<sup>122</sup>

The fundamental shift in our understanding of place is that it is no longer is a unique fixed entity but something that shifts and changes. This fundamental shift in the ways in which people relate to place have also had an impact on the place-specific concepts of identity and dwelling, as Leach indicates: 'not only must we question the primacy of a concept such as 'dwelling' as a source of identification, but we must also ask whether a concept which is so place-specific can any longer retain much authority'<sup>123</sup>. The mobile nature of contemporary societies has led to an increasing acceptance of the notion that meaningful place experiences are also enabled in transition, as opposed to the conventional idea of the need for fixedness to a place to enable meaning, as today largely 'it is in the passing that we dwell'.<sup>124</sup>

It is now well accepted that technologies have greatly redefined the notion of place/place experiences and can be discussed as a result of two main processes of dematerialization and demobilization.<sup>125</sup> Dematerialization refers to the replacement of the physicality of things by downsized things achieving the same output (emails replacing letters, for example, bringing in a situation where our perception of physicality changes drastically). Demobilization refers to the notion of how efficiency is reduced by moving people and goods, as the internet enables us to complete various tasks while being stationed in one place. Both dematerialization and demobilization combined have influenced our perception of the physical domain, which in turn has affected our notions of place. In the similar domain of study of technology's impact on peoples' perception, Maurizio Lazzarato developed the term 'noopolitics' which is 'broadly posited as a power exerted over the life of the mind including perception, attention, and memory'<sup>126</sup> under the

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<sup>122</sup> Malcolm McCullough, "On the Urbanism of Locative Media [Media and the City]," *Places* 18, no. 2 (June 15, 2006), 29.

<sup>123</sup> Neil Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus: The Redomestication of Central and Eastern Europe.," in *Architecture and revolution contemporary perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Neil Leach (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 150-62, 153.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

<sup>125</sup> William John Mitchell, *E-topia: "Urban Life, Jim--but Not as We Know It"* (MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>126</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, "The Concepts of Life and the Living in the Societies of Control," in *Deleuze and the Social* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), <http://dx.doi.org/null>, 171-190, 179.

contemporary forms of immaterial production and processes resulting from the current communication and information age. This reinforces the fact that the range of operations and activities made possible by smart technologies such as mobile phones and the internet modify our sensory perception (visual, acoustic and haptic) and affects the way we conceptualise and understand places today.

Virtual spaces are increasingly related to physical places, and arguably they offer similar favourable platforms as real physical settings for developing a sense of place.<sup>127</sup> These characteristics which are associated with physical space in the real world are essential in developing a sense of place, and there are commensurate opportunities in the domain of cyberspace which allow for formulating and structuring one's position in ways that further enable the possibility of dwelling.<sup>128</sup> The organization of spaces allows for the creation of a sense of place through communities that form based on the similar planes of understanding which includes socio-cultural connotations. Cicognani explains how 'communities are independent from their spatial organization, even though their development shows itself inside an "action space"; communities can exist beyond their geographical location'.<sup>129</sup>

Such ideas and processes have provided 'feasible' options for people to engage themselves with virtual communities in cyberspace, creating other understanding of place engagement. The pervasiveness of communication technology has caused some of the concepts of sense of continuity and belonging to be derived more from the electronic networking of decentralized people and places, and the dependability on the physical stability is thus reduced.<sup>130</sup> This is evident in the increasing cyber communities and online forums that to some indicate the reducing role of physical places for social activities. Leach elaborates more broadly on the changing role of place on people's identity construction as 'Identities are constituted less through notions of place such as places of origin, birth place and increasingly through more transitory phenomena, such as jobs and possessions.<sup>131</sup> The changing conditions and the new environments provided by the dynamic changes of the contemporary era he considers progressive, arguing that 'the fundamental capacity of human beings to accommodate and adapt to new conditions are overlooked',<sup>132</sup> and therefore the situation is considered challenging and alienating. Leach states that 'in an age where the actual space of the crossroads is giving way to the virtual space of the

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<sup>127</sup> Anna Cicognani, "On the Linguistic Nature of Cyberspace and Virtual Communities," *Virtual Reality* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 16-24, doi:10.1007/BF01409794.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>130</sup> William J. Mitchell, *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City* (MIT Press, 2004).

<sup>131</sup> Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus: The Redomestication of Central and Eastern Europe." 155.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 154.



internet, the hegemony of the physical is being progressively eroded. This is not to deny the necessity of place. Rather to recognise the possibility of shift in mechanisms of symbolic identifications.<sup>133</sup> Technology here is suggested to offer 'mechanisms of symbolic identification' as opposed to being a 'source of alienation'<sup>134</sup> which offers more credibility to virtual experiences; or in other words, both virtual and real places should be allowed to be weighed equally.

Considering the immense impact of the technologies that interconnect information, activities and events, sociologist Manuel Castells categorizes two types of spaces: space of flows and space of places. 'Space of flows links up electronically separate locations in an interactive network that connects activities and people in distinct geographical contexts and Space of places organizes experience and activity around the confines of locality.'<sup>135</sup> Castells acknowledges that there are competing logics between space of flows and the space of places, or cyberspace and physical space, respectively. What is significant is the view that 'our cities do not disappear in the virtual networks, but they are transformed by the interface between electronic communication and physical interaction, by the combination of networks and places'.<sup>136</sup>

Information and communication technologies such as the internet and the mobile phone have refashioned the relationship between man and his environment; a new sense of place has emerged at the intersection of the virtual realm and physical realm in an augmented hybrid reality. With technology opening up new forms of visualities, social networking and engagement, lived experiences have acquired an altered meaning 'as the ability to operationalise everyday life in the form of a status update that will elicit a response from one's network becomes more valuable skill than getting to the truth of the lived event'<sup>137</sup>

Another changing notion in understanding place is the blurring of the dominant meanings of space and place which is particularly significant for this research to address. The meanings of space and place have been consistently explored, argued and debated, it was easier to maintain a clear distinction between these concepts which is not the case in present-day context. A well-known description of the difference between the terms 'space' from 'place' was given by Michel De Certeau in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, where he explained that 'a place is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence'. A

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid,153.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>135</sup> Castells, "Space of flows, space of places: materials for a theory of urbanism in the information age."

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> John Macgregor Wise, "Ecstatic Assemblages of Visuality," in *New visualities, new technologies : the new ecstasy of communication*, ed. Hille Koskela and John Macgregor Wise (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub, 2012), 1-5.

place is thus 'an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability' and "space is composed of intersections of mobile elements". De Certeau synthesized that 'space is a practiced place'<sup>138</sup>. Human geographer Tuan in his *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* offered an experiential meaning for both terms, stating that 'place is security, space is freedom: if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause'<sup>139</sup>. Aldo van Eyck combined the temporal and relative dimension of space into concepts of place and occasion: Van Eyck considered space and time as lifeless concepts which can be humanized through meaningful activity and experiences in space : 'Whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more. For space in the image of man is place, and time in the image of man is occasion'.<sup>140</sup>

Another perspective on space and place explanation was offered by Edward Soja in his work *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. He argued that 'the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translations, transformations, and experience.<sup>141</sup> Coining the term 'spatiality' which reflects the dynamic nature of space, Soja untangles 'naturalness' from material conditions of place and suggests that spatiality dynamically affects our life experiences, and that there exists 'an essential connection between spatiality and being'.<sup>142</sup>

In the contemporary era, John Agnew considers that both the notion of space and place meanings are challenged, a situation which is initiated by the 'idea that the world itself is increasingly "placeless" as space-spanning connections and flows of information, things, and people undermine the rootedness of a wide range of processes anywhere in particular'.<sup>143</sup> The theoretical view of space has also been altered: for example, in his work *Polar Inertia* Virilio quotes Werner von Braun stating that 'tomorrow, to learn space will be as useful as learning to drive a car'.<sup>144</sup> Spaces tend to reflect the notion of absorbing place into it as sub-theme, and from the view of the technologies explained earlier the notion of place is increasing becoming obsolete and space is gradually conquering place.<sup>145</sup> Space carries several layers of embedded meanings as its 'is not

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<sup>138</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Calif; London: University of California Press, 1988), 28.

<sup>139</sup> Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, Reprint (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 158.

<sup>140</sup> Aldo van Eyck Cited in Bryan Lawson, *The language of space [electronic resource]* (Oxford: Architectural, 2001), 23.

<sup>141</sup> Edward W Soja, *Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory* (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 80.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>143</sup> John A. Agnew, "Space and Place," in *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone (SAGE, 2011).

<sup>144</sup> Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 76.

<sup>145</sup> Thomas L Friedman, *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

simply a container in which modern life is played out. Rather, the ways we conceptualise and operationalise space are products of political, economic and cultural processes. In turn, the organisation of space offers opportunities and constraints for the further development of those processes.<sup>146</sup> With the increasing significance attached with spaces, places today as Agnew states are 'often associated with the world of the past and location/space with the world of the present and future, largely places being considered nostalgic, regressive or even reactionary, and space is progressive and radical.'<sup>147</sup>

With this changing perception of space place understanding, it becomes challenging and difficult to subscribe to a specific notion. However what needs to be accepted is the blurring and shifting boundaries of what define space and place. From this perspective the notion of space and place as used in this research is drawn from the view which Robert Sack explains as follows:

Place implies space, and each home is a place in space. Space is a property of the natural world, but it can be experienced. From the perspective of experience, place differs from space in terms of familiarity and time. A place requires human agency, is something that may take time to know, and a home especially so. As we move along the earth we pass from one place to another. But if we move quickly the places blur; we lose track of their qualities, and they may coalesce into the sense that we are moving through space.<sup>148</sup>

Hence space and place in this research are considered as terms where the boundaries blur and are more intertwined into one another in terms of meaning and experience, defined contingently by activities and objects. This notion is particularly important in this research context, as it opens up more ways of approaching and understanding the spatial behaviour of people through which they identify themselves with the urban environment.

To summarise, technologies have redefined the relationship between people and place, and technology can be seen as a medium which has 'reconstituted and reorganized spatial relations such that places were remade and reconfigured'.<sup>149</sup> These changing perceptions of place have been brought about by the now-coexisting cyberspace and physical space, and space/place

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<sup>146</sup> Richard Dennis, *Cities in modernity: representations and productions of metropolitan space, 1840-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>147</sup> Agnew, "Space and Place."

<sup>148</sup> Robert David Sack, *Homo geographicus: a framework for action, awareness, and moral concern* (Baltimore [etc.]: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 16.

<sup>149</sup> Donatella Pacelli and Maria Cristina Marchetti, *Tempo, spazio e società: la ridefinizione dell'esperienza collettiva* (FrancoAngeli, 2007), 148.

understanding offers valuable insights for responding to these new spatial relations in which this research context is grounded.

## 2.4 Changing conception of identity and identity constructions

Identity traditionally possessed the meaning of 'all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation'.<sup>150</sup> Today several possibilities and conceptions of identity have emerged where it is considered as 'something which is relatively fixed but which can be pulled and pushed into new shapes or, more radically, as entirely relational, a 'fold' in lines of forces'.<sup>151</sup>

In relation to the process of globalisation, cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains that 'identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being; not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves'.<sup>152</sup> Identity seen as a concept of 'becoming' than 'being' also resonates with architect Lebbeus Woods, as he explains through the example of a person walking across the room. At any instance, he is "only" at a particular place in the room, defined by Cartesian co-ordinates. In such a case when we observe how the person crosses the threshold of the limits of the increment, it happens between co-ordinates, and to logically describe such a system would be 'becoming'. Woods further explains that simple motion or historical transformation cannot be divided into discrete increments of identity, but flows as a continuum so that at any one "point" a thing is simultaneously what it "is" and what it is "becoming". Both from architectural and cultural perspectives, identity has to be redefined as something which is 'transformational, sliding and shifting in an on-going complex stream of becoming'.<sup>153</sup> This leads one towards adopting a more positive approach towards understanding identity in the urban environment, as identity in itself is constantly restructured, reconstructed and redefined in the process of 'becoming'.

In contemporary societies that are largely characterised by travel and movement, 'just as territorialisations are always shifting, so too identifications remain fleeting and transitory, while always leaving behind traces of their passage'.<sup>154</sup> In a society that is constantly mobile, people

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<sup>150</sup> Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?," in *Questions of Cultural identity*, ed. Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1996), 1-17.

<sup>151</sup> Margaret Wetherell, *Theorizing identities and social action* (Houndmills, Basingstoke [etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.

<sup>152</sup> Hall, "Introduction: Who needs identity?," 5.

<sup>153</sup> Lebbeus Woods, "Everyday War," in *Mortal City*, ed. Peter Lang, 1st ed. (New York: Princeton Archit.Press, 1997), 46-53, 48.

<sup>154</sup> Neil Leach, "Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification with Space," in *Habitus: a Sense of Place*, ed. Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, Second Edition (England: Ashgate, 2005), 297-311, 306.

tend spend more time in transitional spaces; hence 'identity can be defined increasingly in terms of departures and impending arrivals'.<sup>155</sup> According to Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, today territories are subject to deterritorialisations and recombined into new assemblages and are reterritorialised.<sup>156</sup> It is very important to comprehend the dimensions of territorialisation/deterritorialisation in which socio-spatial boundaries and identities are inscribed and erased. So heterogeneity is now part and parcel of the identity of modern societies in which processes of unification and differentiation always operate simultaneously.

In the previous section on the changing conception of places, how technology has had an impact on place-specific concepts of identity was discussed. 'Information' arguably now pervades all facets of urban living where 'we present ourselves not as classical subjects asserting agency: rather we are subjects only to the extent that we participate in the production of a social world of information as fractal instances of data'.<sup>157</sup> Facebook, Twitter and similar social networks have led to the 'materialization of the lived events into its image as "status update"—the rationalization and quantification of everyday life into discrete packets of information—transforms identity into an aggregation of data'.<sup>158</sup> This way identity as a concept becomes more linked to the non-physical realm of the cyber social space and is 'reaffirmed' by the ability of 'circulation, distribution and exchange'.<sup>159</sup>

## 2.5 Discussion

It is important to study identity construction in multicultural contexts from a spatial, perspective, not only because space invariably links to the issue of identity but also because of the challenges that are posed for architecture to deal with identity spatially. Multiculturalism creates urban contexts that require endless spatial negotiations of cultural difference to inscribe one's identity. This in turn implores a sensitive and responsible design approach for urban environments. Today, architectural challenges have become manifold, especially with the urgency for its meaningful intervention to address the identity issues instigated with the volatility of 'socio-physical' urban forms. These challenges are complex, as multicultural environments today demand the strengthening of the distinctive cultural identities of different ethnic communities,

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<sup>155</sup> Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus: The Redomestication of Central and Eastern Europe," 153.

<sup>156</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, New Ed (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2004).

<sup>157</sup> Mark Nunes, "Ecstatic Updates: Facebook, Identity and the Fractal Subject," in *New visualities, new technologies the new ecstasy of communication*, ed. J. Macgregor Wise and Hille Koskela (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2012), 7–26.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

enabling them to have their own cultural voice and architectural expression.<sup>160</sup> This urges new directions to be considered in architectural conceptualizations of spatiality which support the socio-cultural connotations for identity negotiations.

In the search for forms to address this diversity superficially, designers often create homogenised environments rendering 'universal sameness'<sup>161</sup> in spatial and cultural expressions, erasing the scope for individuals to identify with that environment. Such environments create a condition of uniformity that leads to the deterritorialisation of the context. In broader anthropological terms 'deterritorialisations refers to the severance of social, political, or cultural practices from their native places and populations'.<sup>162</sup> From another perspective, namely that of aesthetic sensibility, this uniformity also attests to the fact that 'it is impossible to reach cross-cultural aesthetic appreciation outside the social context.'<sup>163</sup> Hence designing environments for people with diverse aesthetic sensibilities also presents a challenging task, as a new direction in architecture is required that can enable 'aesthetic openness towards divergent cultural experiences'.<sup>164</sup> Overall, a designed environment which does not acknowledge and address multicultural needs not only tends to create greater instability and difficulty in maintaining both local and national identities, but also results in allowing spatial practices that are devoid of any cultural connotations. Such developments deny the 'role of architecture as a "bearer" of cultural meaning'.<sup>165</sup>

'Buildings are material expressions of the cultures that construct them'<sup>166</sup> and cities have always been places of difference and of variation, as one of the important traditions of the city is that it has never been a place of uniform homogeneous culture.<sup>167</sup> The difference emerging is the increasing degree of heterogeneity in cities today, which often leads to conflictual conditions.<sup>168</sup> It is indispensable for all design decisions and interventions to raise important questions in terms of addressing culture in and of the city; how do people resist and transgress that spatial domination? What are the cultural sites on which resistance should take place? What are the most

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<sup>160</sup> Incirlioglu and Tandogan, "Cultural Diversity, Public Space, Aesthetics, and Power."

<sup>161</sup> Marc Auge, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, New edition (Verso Books, 2009).XII

<sup>162</sup> Adam, *The globalisation of modern architecture*. 140

<sup>163</sup> Incirlioglu and Tandogan, "Cultural Diversity,Public Space, Aesthetics, and Power."

<sup>164</sup> Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 7, no. 2 (1990): 237–51, 245.

<sup>165</sup> Paul Emmons, John Hendrix, and Jane Lomholt, *The cultural role of architecture : contemporary and historical perspectives* (Abingdon, Oxon England ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 92.

<sup>166</sup> Richard Lorch and Raymond J. Cole, "Introduction: Knowledge, Values and Building," in *Buildings, Culture and Environment: Informing Local and Global Practices*, ed. Richard Lorch and Raymond J. Cole, 1st ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 1–17,4.

<sup>167</sup> Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake*.

<sup>168</sup> Wendy Pullan, Britt Baillie, and Lefkos Kyriacou, *Locating urban conflicts ethnicity, nationalism and the everyday* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

appropriate cultural themes to challenge? And what form should these challenges adopt?<sup>169</sup> These compelling questions become central in guiding the design thinking process towards creating socio-culturally responsive urban environments.

Identity and culture as concepts are too complex to unravel in a single piece of work but it is imperative to identify their changing conceptions in order to open different trajectories for an architectural understanding. The very placelessness and the often-cited but vague identity crisis have ushered in a renewed interest in this domain which requires us to understand the conception that defines people and place relationships anew. The various topics introduced in earlier sections explained the apparent challenges facing/experienced by contemporary society, and suggested how the complexity and the diversity involved could be reinterpreted to offer an alternative understanding of place, identity and culture. This research strives to develop a multi-dimensional approach to understand and disentangle the complexity of place and identity relationship, and suggest how it can be reinterpreted in the multicultural urban environment.

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman notes that 'at no time did identity become a problem', describing the identity itself as a 'problem' from its birth in the sense of a task, as something one needs to do something about.<sup>170</sup> Bauman affirms that one will think of identity only when one is not sure of where one belongs, in the sense of not knowing how to place one's self amongst the variety of behavioural patterns and inhibitions created about the acceptance of the way of their placement. This immediately brings to the forefront the crucial role played by the physical setting, which is the platform that enables the production of these behavioural patterns. Although technology has had a great impact on and redefined place, the latter has not been replaced by virtual space. We continue to exist in physical space where there remains a need for grounding life in effective contexts that enable a sense of identity and belonging with physical environment to be established and maintained.

The complex relationship between peoples and places in the contemporary context has led to a sense of identity as continuously shifting, transforming and reconstituting. In this research, understanding the notion of identity is approached by focussing on the narrative construction of identity as it enables the unravelling of those 'identity elements that are much more pliable and it is possible to produce an identity by manipulating the specific components of identity that can

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<sup>169</sup> Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall, and Iain Borden, *The city cultures reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 137.

<sup>170</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist-or a Short History of Identity," in *Questions of cultural identity*, ed. Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1996), 18-36, 22.

actually be controlled'.<sup>171</sup> The flexible components of identity are indicative of the implicit relationships between people and place that are used for negotiating, constructing and reconstituting ones' identity, which is identified as one of the important factors that is to be considered in understanding identity construction and negotiation in contemporary urban environments. As 'architecture has its own special significance as the most public of all arts, and the one which may most acutely influence the social',<sup>172</sup> comprehending this crucial role of place offers valuable insights to architecture overall and more specifically to this research for supporting the full complexity of this sense of identity in the urban environment. Anchoring this research in the larger context of multiculturalism and changing notions of place-relationship, further explanation of narrowing down to the next level of case study which is the everyday urban context in multicultural cities is provided in Chapter 5.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This research deals with complexity from two directions, one dealing with the notion of identity itself and the other addressing urban spatial complexities. As mentioned elsewhere there is a labyrinth of factors in which the identity is caught: this chapter, by delineating the urban context and its relevance for studying identity constructions, has provided clarity and focus for the approach to spatial complexity in this research. The previous chapter highlighted the inherent power of place in identity constructions and the above discussion reveals the crucial role of architects and urban designers in defining the urban environment as the 'ambiguity of urban forms is a source of the city's tension as well as a struggle for interpretation'<sup>173</sup>, creating difficulty for people in connecting with the urban environment. Some of the challenges for architecture in comprehending identity issues in contemporary contexts are defined by the complexities created by the conceptions of place, identity and culture which have been discussed in this chapter, conceptions that themselves are changing in time with globalisation and with the advances in technology just noted. This chapter has presented a number of relevant approaches for understanding the conceptions of place, identity and culture and how they facilitate in approaching the study of identity for this research. The discussions also identified the intertwining and entangling nature of socio-cultural and spatial contexts, showing the need for architecture to develop new directions for designing multicultural environments, and setting out the need and the significance of the larger multicultural context for understanding identity constructions. Amidst the impending challenges of multiculturalism and the complexities

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<sup>171</sup> Ananda Mitra, "Mapping Narbs," in *New visualities, new technologies the new ecstasy of communication*, ed. J. Macgregor Wise and Hille Koskela (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2012), 27–39, 29.

<sup>172</sup> Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus: The Redomestication of Central and Eastern Europe," 152.

<sup>173</sup> Kim Dovey, *Becoming places : urbanism/architecture/identity/power* (London: Routledge, 2010), 58.



implicated on identity constructions and negotiations, the chapter suggest that architecture needs a renewed and multi-dimensional approach for comprehending identity and place relationships, and hence also shows the importance of such an approach to this research.

## Chapter 3

## Need for Interdisciplinarity

### 3.1 Introduction

The discussion in the previous chapter suggests that for a more comprehensive understanding of identity an renewed approach is demanded, where the role of physical settings in identity constructions is taken into account. Building on the previous discussion, this chapter examines in detail the more particular needs for an interdisciplinary approach in this research for studying identity constructions in the urban context.<sup>174</sup> Following this, the chapter discusses selected disciplines which are potentially significant for those concepts and approaches which can help to comprehend, and provide valuable insights into, the complexity of identity constructions in urban environments. Discussing relevant concepts in the disciplines of human geography, social psychology and phenomenology, this chapter delineates how those concepts can be constructively brought together for this research, and identifies significant connections between these disciplines which facilitate research in this context. The conclusions of this chapter form the basis for the interdisciplinary framework of analysis deployed in this thesis (and explained in the methodology chapter), which is one of the main contributions of this research.

### 3.2 The need for interdisciplinary research

The increasingly mobile society of this global era is facing a plethora of newly emerging identity issues that is discussed in different ways by different disciplines. With geographical boundaries becoming more permeable, distances reduced and cultures no longer having a clear territorial base, there is an emergence of a place which is more non-physical in nature and where identities remain obscure. It is argued here that the various disciplines approaching identity studies fail to address this complexity and, in particular, do not adequately take into consideration the context—that, is the physical setting. This could potentially result in a skewed understanding of the notions of identity which adds to, rather than clarifies, the existing complexity.

Environmental psychologist Harold Proshansky explained that physical cognitive structures are more complex than social and personal cognitive structures. Being subtle, they tend to be remote from the awareness of the individual, because physical settings are 'backdrops' against which events occur. Apart from the effects of disciplinary boundaries, this is one of main reasons for the

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<sup>174</sup> **This chapter has been published as a paper: Lakshmi Priya Rajendran, Stephen Walker, and Rosie Parnell (Sep 2013) 'Understanding identity construction in urban environment through a triadic interdisciplinary lens', in *Research in Social Change Journal (RSC)*, No 5, Issue 3, September 2013, pp. 213-236, Slovenia. ISSN 1855-4148.**

role of the physical setting in identity studies being overlooked so far, as this is largely conceived—or overlooked—as simply being a ‘backdrop’.<sup>175</sup>

In parallel to this tendency to overlook the full complexity of identity-formation, sociologist Manuel Castells has observed that all identities are constructed, and that its complexity lies in understanding how, from what, by whom and for what is it constructed.<sup>176</sup> He notes how identity construction involves multifarious factors:

The construction of identities uses building materials from history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations.<sup>177</sup>

Each discipline approaches or comprehends the above factors from within its own disciplinary conventions. Functioning to represent society and culture,<sup>178</sup> architecture is an all-encompassing discipline that has been significantly challenged by identity issues that increasingly affect urban societies today. While the reasons for complexities and issues has been discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, it can be attributed to two major factors. Firstly, identity is caught in the diverse yet interwoven issues of multiculturalism, which inscribe differences at socio-cultural, economic and political levels. This in turn is spatially manifest, transforming the urban environment into a place for contestation and/or negotiation in addition to the already entangled spatial experiences of people. Secondly, spatial disciplines such as architecture and urban design are increasingly paying attention to visual experience<sup>179</sup> leaving behind more meaning ways to engage with the urban environment. All these factors have not only made the relationship between people and the urban environment more fragile, but have also made the notions of identity negotiations and constructions more difficult for architecture to comprehend and address independently. Apart from these two reasons, most of the research on identity conducted under the aegis of architecture or urbanism tends to focus on the socio-culturally manifested built forms, often discussed ‘architectural identity’ and ‘identity of place’. These concepts largely dwell upon the physicality of the architectural features, and give less attention to the relationship between place and identity construction.

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<sup>175</sup> Proshansky, Rivlin, and Ittelson, *Environmental psychology*.

<sup>176</sup> Manuel Castells, *The power of identity*, 2nd ed. (Malden, Mass; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).7.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>178</sup> Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation: the Reproduction of Post-Fordism in Late-Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011),

<sup>179</sup> Dell Upton, “Architecture in Everyday Life,” *New Literary History* 33, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 707–23, doi:10.2307/20057752, 714.

Hence, from an architectural perspective, the need for understanding the notion of identity construction amidst the complexity of spatial practices in multicultural societies requires an interdisciplinary approach, which will be set out in more detail below. Identity and place are addressed in a coherent, broad spectrum comprising various disciplinary contributions. This research focuses on those disciplines which offer potential intersections that will be useful for expanding the understanding of the identity and place. Different content from these disciplines was chosen to assist in establishing a theoretical support appropriate for this research. This chapter consists of two parts. The first examines relevant contributions from three disciplines — Human Geography, Phenomenology and Social Psychology— and identifies appropriate concepts and context that closely related to the arguments of this study. The disciplines chosen and discussed below are different, but they are potentially significant when brought together and considered in terms of the interfaces which connect them with human and place relation concepts; this combination has the potential to enrich architectural understanding of identity construction. The second part of the chapter explains various disciplinary concepts which, when synthesised, offer valuable insights for identity construction in relation to place experiences in the urban environment.

### 3.3 Human Geography

Embracing both physical and human worlds, geography arguably shares much with the nature of architecture. Geography is a rich domain of study for many disciplines as it contains multifarious approaches for comprehending the people and place relationships. Geographers work with varying scales of spaces, which Helen Couclelis notes as a form of hierarchy of spaces; mathematical, physical, socio-economic, behavioural and experiential spaces spanning both objective and subjective understandings.<sup>180</sup> Particularly of interest to this discussion are the latter three categories of space. Socio-economic space—the relative space defined by social and economic activities and relations—is analysed to offer insights concerning the interplay between social relations and spatial structures.<sup>181</sup> The relevance here lies in viewing space as a ‘social production which is constituted, reproduced, and changed by social relation, and in turn constrain[s] the unfolding of such relation’.<sup>182</sup> This enables us to view identity issues considering the various factors which determine peoples’ social and spatial relations.

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<sup>180</sup> Helen Couclelis, “Location, Place, Region, and Space,” in *Geography’s Inner Worlds: Pervasive Themes in Contemporary American Geography*, ed. Ronald F. Abler, Melvin Gerald Marcus, and Judy M. Olson (Rutgers University Press, 1992), 215–33.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 220.

Behavioural space involves a rich domain for studying people's response to environments based on how they perceive and understand them. According to behavioural geography, 'individuals function in a subjective world—a world in the head'.<sup>183</sup> This perspective immediately puts people at the forefront of research, which is crucial when studying urban environments. Various approaches are developed to study these behavioural spaces, the most popular of them is observing spatial choices and time geography. Understanding the spatial choices of people and groups produces rich data sets which can be used to identify 'the relationship between the spatial behaviour on the one hand and socio economic and other personal characteristics on the other'.<sup>184</sup> Another significant approach in studying behavioural space is time geography developed by Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand in the mid-1960s in his research into human migration patterns in Sweden. Time geography studies and reveals deep structures of all kinds of interactions and transactions between people and environment.<sup>185</sup> In doing so, this approach 'specifies conditions for virtually all forms of interactions'<sup>186</sup> involving people. A time geographic approach can be especially significant in studying urban context, as 'when events are seen located together in a block of space-time they inevitably expose relations which cannot be traced'.<sup>187</sup>

Finally, experiential space is the 'space human beings actually experience before it is passed through the filters of scientific analysis, embracing all the intuitive, unanalyzed, or unarticulated forms of spatial understanding'.<sup>188</sup> In these spaces are embedded by far the most subtle and complex meanings of human actions and interactions. Dealing with spaces which vary from pure space of formal symbols to more affective qualities of spaces, geography is a rich domain of study for many disciplines as it 'contain[s] a seeming plethora of approaches, philosophies and foci'<sup>189</sup> for understanding the world. The profundity of geographical conceptions of space arises due to the complex interconnectedness of these categories of space. Focussing more specifically towards an experiential understanding of people and place interaction (that greatly influences identity formations), human geography clearly has much to offer identity studies.

The main strength of geography, from which this research draws insights, lies in its 'deep conviction that environmental and human processes create the reality in which humankind lives,

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>185</sup> Allan Pred, "The Choreography of Existence: Comments on Hägerstrand's Time-Geography and Its Usefulness," *Economic Geography* 53, no. 2 (April 1, 1977): 207–21, doi:10.2307/142726.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>187</sup> Ronald F. Abler et al., *Geography's Inner Worlds: Pervasive Themes in Contemporary American Geography* (Rutgers University Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>188</sup> Couclelis, "Location, Place, Region, and Space," 220.

<sup>189</sup> C. Gregory Knight, "Geography's Worlds," in *Geography's Inner Worlds: Pervasive Themes in Contemporary American Geography*, ed. Ronald F. Abler, Melvin Gerald Marcus, and Judy M. Olson (Rutgers University Press, 1992), 9–26, 17.

and that those processes are key to understanding the complexity of places'.<sup>190</sup> Geography spans a range of spaces and it was human geographers who first studied how space was enriched with human experience and meaning. Human geography considers people and place relationships to be deep and profound, which is an essential condition for existence; it comprehends the world as one created by human perception, intention and behaviour,<sup>191</sup> which offers a rich understanding of the reciprocal relationships between people and place. It is particularly relevant to study spatial experiences in the contemporary environment frequently characterised by a combination of both intrusiveness and lack of boundaries created by technological symbolic systems of a high level of complexity.<sup>192</sup> Identity is how we make sense of ourselves, and geographers have argued that the meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people who are experiencing them. In this context, human geography offers a rich platform from which to develop a broader scope of place conceptualisations grounded in people's experiential understanding. Human geographic concepts of studying people and places allow us to move towards accepting the 'existence and importance of structures, mechanisms and forces beyond immediate observation'.<sup>193</sup> This enables in-depth understanding of peoples' relation with the physical world. Particularly significant for this research is the understanding of people-place concepts set out in the works of humanist geographers Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph. As Tuan noted 'knowledge of the earth elucidates the world of man... to know the world is to know oneself'.<sup>194</sup>

Tuan's thinking of human-place relationships resonates with his intuitive understanding of human geography. In *Segmented World and Self* his analysis is towards a deeper understanding of the link between human consciousness and spatial structures,<sup>195</sup> while in *Dominance and Affection* his attention moves to the aesthetic exploitation and mistreatment of nature.<sup>196</sup> Throughout his work there is a consistent exploration and reflection on what it is to be human, that is a 'Being-in-the-World', and human environment relationships are explicated as not merely objective and material, but as affective and moral. Tuan's works echoes Heidegger's phenomenological understanding of human experience and physical world, which he argued was instrumental in capturing the essence of human experience. Tuan's writings captured 'the inherent tensions and ambiguities that exist just beneath the apparent concreteness and certainty

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid,17.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>192</sup> Richard Stevens, *Understanding the self* (London: Sage in association with the Open University, 1996).

<sup>193</sup> John Eyles, *Senses of Place* (Silverbook Press, 1985).4-5

<sup>194</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, "Geography, Phenomenology, And The Study Of Human Nature," *Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien* 15, no. 3 (1971): 181-92, 189.

<sup>195</sup> Yi-fu Tuan, *Segmented worlds and self: group life and individual consciousness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

<sup>196</sup> Yi-fu Tuan, *Dominance & affection : the making of pets* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1984).

of the customary rhythms of everyday life'.<sup>197</sup> These concepts of everyday experiences become highly pertinent today in understanding and defining 'places of urbanity'.<sup>198</sup>

Similar notions of the need for deeper and more meaningful experience with places are found in the works of Relph. If Tuan revealed more about place and place experience, Relph was the first to bring out the issues of 'placelessness' in studying people and place relationships. Relph's seminal work *Place and Placelessness* addressed the lack of a sense of place caused by the uniformity of places. He emphasised that 'meanings may be rooted in [a] physical setting but it is a property of human intentions and experiences'.<sup>199</sup> Among all empathetic approaches towards people-place studies, one of the most significant contributions is Relph's categorisation of the different modes of place experiences, explained through the concept of 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness'.<sup>200</sup> In *Place and Placelessness*, Relph discussed seven modes of insiderness and outsiderness based on the extent of one's experiential involvement with a place. David Seamon has stated that 'the value of these modes, particularly in terms of self-awareness, is that they apply to specific place experiences yet provide a conceptual structure in which to understand those experiences in broader terms'.<sup>201</sup> Understanding of 'inside-outside'-ness in one's experience will help in discerning how strongly one identifies with that place. Furthermore, the theory delineates various modes of experiencing places, from profound alienation (existential outsiderness) to complete commitment to a place which is unselfconscious (existential insiderness). This is significant for its immediate relevance and conceptual depth in understanding people's place experiences in everyday urban spatial encounters, and will be developed extensively in what follows.

### 3.4 Social Psychology

Identity is a concept that occupies a prominent place in the literature of social psychology. There, it has been theorized and discussed under two major schools of thought, namely Social Identity Theory and Identity Theory. These theories approach the multi-layered and multi-dimensional concept of identity from different perspectives. The discussion here aims towards a broad understanding of these concepts and delineates only those aspects of the theories which are particularly relevant to this research.

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<sup>197</sup> J. Nicholas Entrikin, "Geographer as humanist," in *Textures of place: exploring humanist geographies*, ed. Paul C Adams, Steven D Hoelscher, and Karen E Till (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 426-440.

<sup>198</sup> Lineu Castello, *Rethinking the meaning of place : conceiving place in architecture-urbanism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 25.

<sup>199</sup> Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976. 47.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.49

<sup>201</sup> David Seamon, "A Singular Impact: Edward Relph's Place and Placelessness," *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter*, 7, no. 3 (1996): 5-8, 4.

The social and environmental conditions of people influence their perception about themselves and others, which slowly becomes part of their identity. Henri Tajfel explains social identity as the individual's knowledge of belonging to certain social groups, as well as the emotions and values this conveys to him or her.<sup>202</sup> Social identity is shaped by the group or entities to which one belongs, and is also responsible for producing group behaviour. Different self images are produced by self concepts and their combinations, which are of utmost importance to the individual. Depending on the particularities of a situation, certain parts of one's identity will be dormant and other parts will be dominating, based on the group which one identifies one's self with.<sup>203</sup> Social Identity Theory assumes that people are attracted towards a group which presents itself with positive characteristics, and tend to avoid groups with negative traits, mainly because of the motivation one feels being part of a positive group. If people cannot leave a group, they will deny the negative characteristics of that group, or reinterpret them as positive self-concepts.<sup>204</sup> Though the physical environment is largely overlooked in most of the identity theories in social psychology, Twigger-Ross et al. have noted that Social Identity Theory is easily transferable, and can be further developed to include aspects of place.<sup>205</sup> Social Identity Theory clearly emphasises the importance of positive esteem, and people would prefer places with physical symbols that enhances it.<sup>206</sup>

Identity Theory has its roots in George Herbert Mead's framework which emphasized that society shapes one's self which in turn shapes one's social behaviour.<sup>207</sup> Through his framework, Identity Theory tried to understand the various concepts of "society" and "self". Identity Theory has developed in two different though closely related directions. The first focuses on examining 'how social structures affect the structure of self and how structure of the self influences social behaviour, whereas the second concentrates on the internal dynamics of self-processes as these affect social behaviour'.<sup>208</sup> According to Identity Theory, the core of an identity is the categorisation of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role, and its performance.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Henri Tajfel, *Social identity and intergroup relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 120.

<sup>203</sup> John C Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group," in *Social identity and intergroup relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 15–40, 18.

<sup>204</sup> Henri Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories: studies in social psychology* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>205</sup> Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, "Place and Identity Processes", 219.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 219.

<sup>207</sup> George Herbert Mead, *Mind, self & society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist* (Chicago [Ill.]: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>208</sup> Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke, "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (December 1, 2000): 284–297, 292.

<sup>209</sup> Peter J. Burke and Judy C. Tully, "The Measurement of Role Identity," *Social Forces* 55, no. 4 (June 1977): 881, doi:10.2307/2577560.



These expectations and meanings form a set of standards that guide behaviour. To compare this with Social Identity Theory, which focuses on 'category-based' identities which relate to ethnicity, Identity Theory deals with 'role-based' identities such as parent or child, in terms of category-based identity.<sup>210</sup> The significant idea which Identity Theory reinforces is that

in the absence of specific information about skills and performance levels relevant to the task, participants in a group that seeks to solve a collective problem will draw upon cultural memory contained in previous status and esteem allocations to obtain information about possible resources available for the task at hand.<sup>211</sup>

This idea, especially with 'information' delineated, can be enriching when applied to understanding people's spatial behaviour in the urban environment. Drawing Social Identity Theory closer towards this research is the fact that 'recently identity theorists have drawn meaning relationship between persons and resources (things that sustain persons and interactions) as central component in identity processes'.<sup>212</sup> Implicit in the concept of resources is the crucial role of physical settings in these identity processes. Both these important theories in social psychology can help us to unravel multifarious factors that define and influence one's identity formations. However, the role of physical settings or place relationships remain implicit in both, so one task of the present work will be to make these explicit.

Another theory which illuminates a wide range of identity issues that pertain to the focus of this research is Identity Process Theory. Defined by Glynis Breakwell, this adopts an approach which aims to understand the concept of identity in relation to place by addressing how and why places become salient for identity concepts. In this theory, identity is seen as a dynamic social product which is the result of interaction between an individual's memory, consciousness and organized construal, and thereby becomes both a structure and a process. Blurring the distinction between social and personal identity, the structure is manifest through thought, action and affect, but a differentiation between the dimensions of content and value is introduced. The content dimension, containing both personal and social identity, is hierarchical but not static, while the value dimension contains the positive or negative associations of these categories.

Breakwell proposes that 'identity should be conceptualised in terms of a biological organism moving through time which develops through accommodation, assimilation and evaluation of the

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<sup>210</sup> Stryker and Burke, "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory," 291.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>212</sup> Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2000): 224-237. 225.

social world'.<sup>213</sup> This process depends on three principles, namely distinctiveness, continuity and self-esteem.<sup>214</sup> Breakwell states that aspects of identity derived from places we belong to arise because places possess symbols that have meaning and significance to us. People's associations with a specific city or area enable them to differentiate themselves from people from other parts of the town. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell state that there is 'compelling evidence that people use place identifications in order to distinguish themselves from others'<sup>215</sup> which is comparable to Norberg-Schulz's views of identity as a concept being inherent in place (mentioned in Chapter 1.4). In this way, place is considered in a similar way to a social category, and therefore place identifications can be thought of as comparable to social identification.<sup>216</sup>

The need to maintain continuity of the self-concept is considered as the second principle of identity formation. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell discuss this concept of continuity with reference to two distinct types ; place-referent continuity, where place acts as a referent to past selves and actions that help in maintaining a link with that place, providing a sense of continuity to their identity: and place congruent continuity, which refers to the maintenance of continuity through characteristics of places which are generic and transferable from one place to another.<sup>217</sup> The third principle self-esteem 'refers to a positive evaluation of one's self or the group with which one identifies; it is concerned with a person's feeling of worth and social value'.<sup>218</sup> Breakwell later introduced a fourth principle, self-efficacy, which is defined 'as an individual's belief in their capabilities to meet situational demands'.<sup>219</sup> That occurs when people believe that they are able to carry out their chosen activities in a given environment.

According to Breakwell, continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy and self-esteem are to be seen as the guiding principles in understanding identity formations, which can also be seen as motives. Various studies in social psychology have explored these principles and motives that are crucial in forming one's identity. One theory which integrates the previous theories on motives of identity is the Motivated Identity Construction Theory. This identified six motives for identity construction; Distinctiveness, Meaning, Continuity, Belonging, Self-esteem and Efficacy.<sup>220</sup> Integrating Motivated Identity Construction Theory with recent social identity research,

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<sup>213</sup> Glynis M Breakwell, *Threatened identities* (Chichester [Sussex]; New York: Wiley, 1983), 24.

<sup>214</sup> This assertion is reinforced by Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, who state that the first principle of identity means the 'desire to maintain personal distinctiveness or uniqueness', 207.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>220</sup> Vivian L. Vignoles, "Identity motives," in *Handbook of identity theory and research*, ed. Seth J Schwartz, Vivian L Vignoles, and Koen Luyckx (New York; London: Springer, 2012), 403–32, 406.

Easterbrookes and Vignoles explained which motives underlie identification for two types of groups: interpersonal networks and social categories.<sup>221</sup> They conducted a five-wave longitudinal study of social identity processes among 268 new university residents and their analyses showed that motives involved in identity enactment processes (which refers to the processes of behaviourally acting out aspects of one's identity)—self-esteem, belonging, and efficacy—significantly changed in identification with flatmates (an interpersonal network group), whereas motives involved in identity definition processes (which refers to the mainly cognitive processes of defining oneself as a symbolic object with particular characteristics and descriptive labels) —meaning, self-esteem and distinctiveness—significantly changed in identification with halls of residence (an abstract social category). The results of their study showed that all these motives changed over time. The theory explicitly offers a valuable framework for studying the factors that are important for understanding people's identification with a specific group. But more significantly for this thesis these identity construction motives, when interpreted for their spatial dimension, offer an interesting dimension for analysing the identity constructions of people in relation to place. Throwing light on the role of the physical environment in everyday contexts, group instincts and social and personal meanings associated with places, all of the theories described above in one way or another open up new trajectories for understanding the meaning embedded in identity construction and related processes. This research takes into account the various factors discussed in this section, though it particularly anchors to the identity motives as this offers a potential framework that can be integrated and developed along with other disciplinary concepts.

### 3.5 Phenomenology

Phenomenology may be broadly understood as the unbiased descriptive study of whatever appears to the consciousness, precisely in the manner in which it so appears. Phenomenology was the first movement to understand the human embeddedness in the environment, delineating the rich experiential relation and understanding to make visible the environment.<sup>222</sup> It emerged in the school of Fanz Brentano and was developed by Edmund Husserl. Husserl presented phenomenology as approaching 'whatever appears as such', including everything meant or thought, in the manner of its appearing, in the 'how' of its manifestation.<sup>223</sup> Phenomenology,

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<sup>221</sup> M. Easterbrook and V. L. Vignoles, "Different Groups, Different Motives: Identity Motives Underlying Changes in Identification With Novel Groups," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 38, no. 8 (May 8, 2012): 1066–80, 1074 doi:10.1177/0146167212444614.

<sup>222</sup> Dermot Moran, "Introduction," in *Routledge phenomenology reader*, ed. Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1–16, 4.

<sup>223</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical investigations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001).

which is 'characterised as a way of seeing rather than a set of doctrines',<sup>224</sup> aims to describe in 'all its complexity the manifold layers of the experience of objectivity as it emerges at the heart of subjectivity'.<sup>225</sup> This quality of interlinking objective and subjective aspects of human experience enables deeper understanding of identity constructions in relation to place experiences. Another significant aspect of phenomenology comes from Husserl's approach to the structure of our everyday manner of human being in the world, termed 'the natural attitude'.<sup>226</sup> This structure of natural attitude revealed the world in a certain way while itself remaining concealed.<sup>227</sup> Phenomenology does not just involve a normal immersed attitude but requires a 'change of orientation, a detachment or disengagement'<sup>228</sup> that enables us to understand the nature of experiences clearly.

This process of delineating and getting to the core of the nature of experiences was what Husserl called epoché —reduction or bracketing.<sup>229</sup> Hence Phenomenology goes beyond appearances, seeking out the essence:.

Phenomenology must bring to pure expression, must describe in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences. Each such statement of essence is an a priori statement in the highest sense of word.<sup>230</sup>

It has been described as 'highly problematical if not impossible to define the essentials of phenomenology',<sup>231</sup> mainly due to the various different interpretations of accepted doctrines such as the intentional structure of consciousness, which are interpreted differently by well-known phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. One common objective of the phenomenological approach is 'the enlarging and deepening of the range of our immediate experience'<sup>232</sup> by going 'back to the things themselves'.<sup>233</sup> Phenomenology as a method thus attempts to reduce the complexity of defining or interpreting concepts that underlie it.

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<sup>224</sup> Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>226</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas, Part I*, accessed August 1, 2013, <http://archive.org/details/IdeasPartI>.

<sup>227</sup> Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 4

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>229</sup> Husserl, *Logical investigations*.

<sup>230</sup> Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney, eds., *Routledge phenomenology reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 66.

<sup>231</sup> Herbert Spiegelberg, *The phenomenological movement: a historical introduction* (Hague; Boston; Hingham, MA: M. Nijhoff; Distributors for the United States and Canada, Kluwer Boston, 1994), 681.

<sup>232</sup> Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 42.

<sup>233</sup> Husserl, *Logical investigations*, 252.

At this juncture it is useful to discuss the various steps of the phenomenological method formulated by Herbert Spiegelberg in his work *The Phenomenological Movement*. Spiegelberg identified the following seven steps, which are explained briefly below to facilitate an understanding of phenomenology as a method to support the study of people's experiences.

1. *Investigating particular phenomena*: this includes three operations, which are usually not clearly distinguished, and usually referred to as 'phenomenological descriptions'. Phenomenological Intuiting is one of the most demanding operations, which requires utter concentration on the object intuited without becoming absorbed in it to the point of no longer looking critically. While phenomenological analysing traces the elements and structure of the phenomena obtained by intuiting, it does not in any sense demand dissecting them into separate parts. It comprises the distinguishing of the constituents of the phenomena as well as exploration of their relations to and connections with adjacent phenomena. Phenomenological description of the phenomena thus intuited and analysed goes hand in hand with the preceding steps, its more affirming the connection between it.

2. *Investigating general essences*: General essences are conceived of as phenomena that differ from particulars.

3. *Apprehending essential relationships among essences*: Analysing an entity in itself acquaints us only with its components. It includes the discovery of certain essential relationships or connections pertaining to such essences.

4. *Watching modes of appearing*: phenomenology is the systematic exploration of the phenomena, not only in the sense of what appears (whether particulars or general essences), but also in the way in which things appear.

5. *Watching the constitution of phenomenon in consciousness*: the purpose of such a study is the determination of the typical structure of a constitution in consciousness by means of an analysis of the essential sequence of steps. A first illustration of such a constitution can be the experience of getting oriented in a new city whose picture gradually takes shape in our mind.

6. *Suspending belief in the existence of the phenomena*: this includes the systematic cancellation of all those acts by which consciousness supposedly constitutes the phenomena. It facilitates genuine intuiting, analysing and describing of the given.

7. Interpreting the meaning of phenomena: unveiling of hidden meanings or at most intuitive verifications of anticipations about less accessible layers of the phenomena, layers which can be uncovered, although they are not immediately manifested.

The first three steps have been accepted, at least implicitly, and practiced by those who have aligned themselves with the phenomenological movement.<sup>234</sup> These steps show how the complexities of people's experiences can be effectively studied and understood through phenomenological method, although this is rarely considered as a potential means to study people and place interactions. Phenomenological philosophers believe that in our understanding of the individual's experience of the world, we often reduce the ontological content of things to a formal and objective content malleable to scientific analysis. In this process we overlook what we cannot capture or comprehend without using objective methods. To overcome this insufficiency of scientific methods which are mostly quantitative, architectural theorist Norberg-Schulz has suggested that phenomenological philosophy could provide an appropriate approach to answer the questions of the complex relation between person and world.<sup>235</sup> He believes in Heideggerian philosophy which allows the thingness of things<sup>236</sup>—so often completely neglected by objective methods of systematic analysis like structuralism—to be revealed, presented and understood.

The most compelling aspect of phenomenology lies in describing in its own terms, 'the essential and irreducible nature of the experience of consciousness in the world'.<sup>237</sup> Phenomenological philosophy, as Zaner has phrased it,

would seek to explicate the foundational presuppositions of every human engagement including necessarily itself... its fundamental interest is always to bring out the inobvious, the taken for granted, the hidden, in short the foundational presuppositions without which the affairs in question would not be that which they are... [it] is concerned to focus on 'essences', the invariant of all variations.<sup>238</sup>

Phenomenology's enduring contribution is its patient descriptive analyses of the phenomena of consciousness. Standing against the narrowing down of experience, phenomenology has a 'rich understanding of the subjective and the relation between subjectivity and objectivity, whereby objectivity is an achievement or production of subjectivity'. The significance that Heidegger

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<sup>234</sup> Spiegelberg, *The phenomenological movement*, 684.

<sup>235</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New edition (Rizzoli International Publications, 1980).

<sup>236</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic writings: Martin Heidegger*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2010), 139–212.

<sup>237</sup> Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 7.

<sup>238</sup> Richard M Zaner, "Solitude and Sociality," in *Phenomenological Sociology*, ed. George Psathas (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1973), 32.

placed on essence, that Merleau-Ponty placed on the body as interface between mind and world, that Sartre placed on existence preceding essence, and of Spielberg's phenomenology as a method all represent valuable insights which phenomenology can offer for understanding the complexity of identity construction through relationship to place which is propitious to this research.

### 3.6 Discussion

Comparing the historical and present context of identity formation, social psychologist Judith Howard points out:

At earlier historical moments, identity was not much an issue; when societies were more stable, identity was to a greater extent assigned, rather than selected or adopted. In current times, however, the concept of identity carries full weight of the need for a sense of who one is, together with an often overwhelming pace of change in surrounding social contexts— changes in the groups and networks in which people and their identities are embedded and in societal structures and practices in which those networks are themselves embedded.<sup>239</sup>

Today various issues of identity face increasing ambiguity in comprehending 'where one belongs to'. Concepts of multi-territoriality<sup>240</sup> and global sense of place<sup>241</sup> have become common platforms of discussions on identity issues in urban living. The increasingly mobile nature of societies results in multiple and fluid identities. In addition, the lack of spatial referents accompanying spatial mobility, which previously provided valuable cues for identifying oneself in urban environments, has created a strong sense of uncertainty, deepening the questions of 'where' and 'how' people identify themselves. Identity itself is caught in a labyrinth of diverse yet interwoven issues of multiculturalism, which inscribe differences at socio-cultural, economic and political levels. This in turn is spatially manifest, transforming urban environments into places for contestation and negotiation, resulting in a further entanglement of meanings, experiences and place relations that facilitate in constructing one's identity.

To disentangle these three aspects, the disciplinary choices discussed above prove to be vital. All three disciplines have displayed—in different ways—the potential to elucidate the nature of human experience and existence (see Fig: 3.1). For instance, phenomenology's particular attention to the essence of experiences enables one to reveal the unique nature of human encounter with world and the kind of objectivities normally encountered there. Human geography's empathetic approach towards the profound relationship between people and place

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<sup>239</sup> Judith A. Howard, "Social Psychology of Identities," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 367–393, 367.

<sup>240</sup> Petcou, "Media-polis/media-city City."

<sup>241</sup> Massey, "A Global Sense of Place."

throws light on the implicit yet strongly reciprocal impact of this relationship on identity itself. Finally, social psychology's identity theories prove to be complex but enriching when interpreted from a spatial dimension, and are valuable for studying identity construction in this context. These three disciplines provide the present study with a depth of understanding of the crucial aspects of meaning, experience and place-engagement that is difficult for architecture to grasp independently.

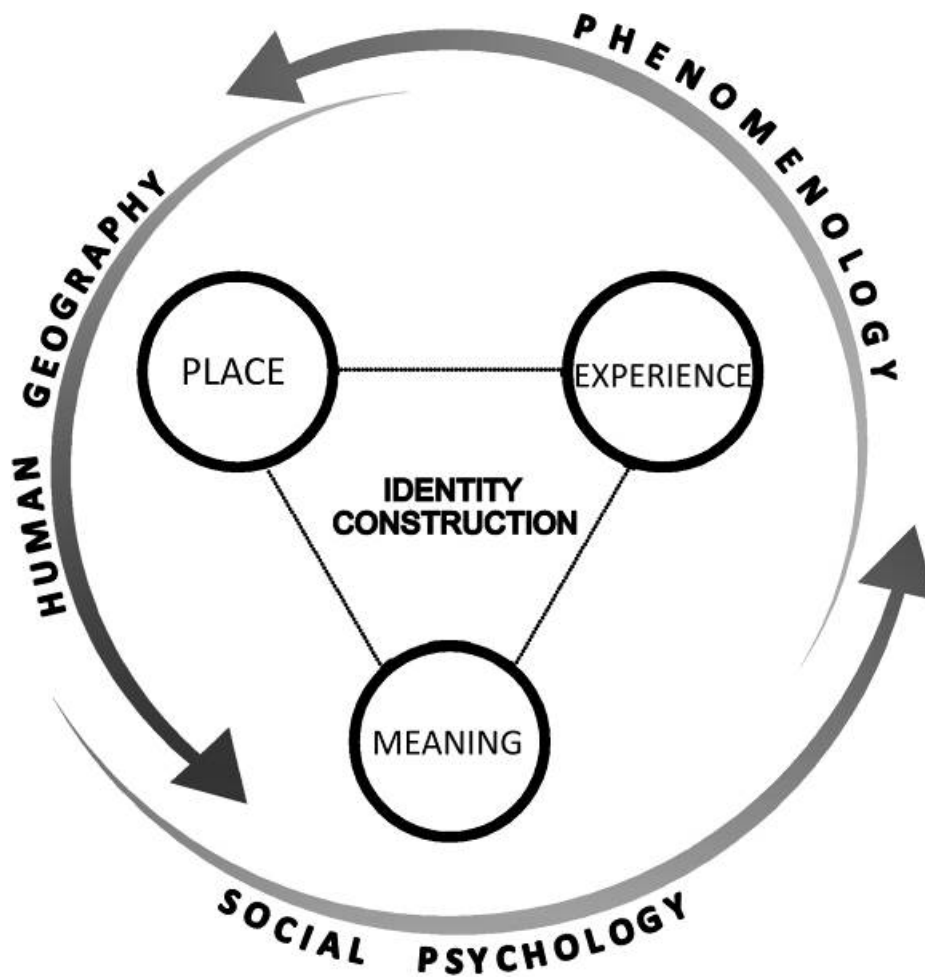
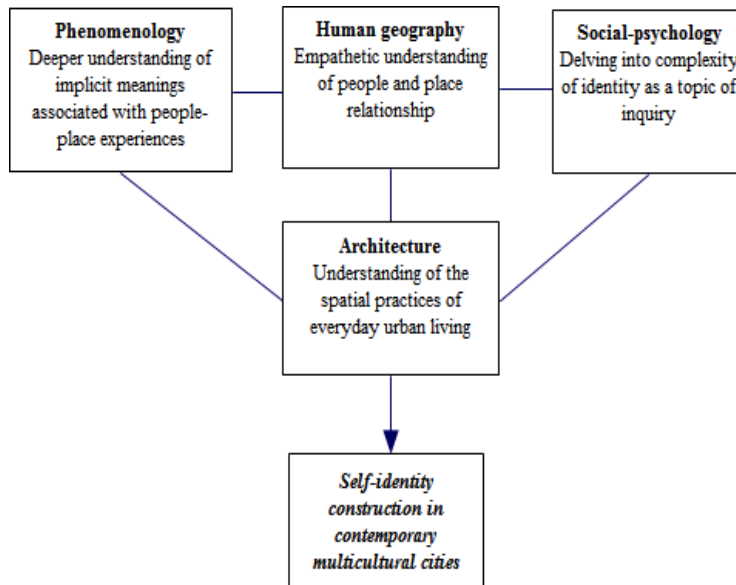


Figure 3.1 Significance of the three disciplines in studying identity construction. (Source: Drawn by the author)



### 3.7 Conclusion



**Figure 3.2 Interdisciplinary concept used for identity study in this research.** (Source: Drawn by the author)

In this chapter it has been suggested that when synthesised, these three disciplines could provide the required depth of understanding of the dimensions of meaning, experience and place-engagement which are otherwise difficult for architecture to grasp. The significant aspect of studying identity construction through this triadic lens is that it not only facilitates in understanding these dimensions in depth, but more importantly enables them to be brought together, the crux on which the methodological framework is developed in this research. This allows for a symbiotic relationship between disciplines to be established: by including the place-relation as one of the factors for understanding identity in social psychology, delving into structures of experience in people-place relationship in human geography, or considering social and personal meanings in phenomenology, all offer different disciplinary understandings of identity that can be drawn on throughout this research.

Fig 3.2 shows how this triadic lens can facilitate the study of identity construction, and creatively unravels various aspects of identity construction for an architectural understanding. By demonstrating how these disciplines can facilitate in studying meaning, experience and place relation, this chapter has suggested that comprehending the process of identity construction and negotiation in contemporary urban societies invariably requires the coalescing of these three disciplines.

*Part II*

**METHODOLOGY**

*Everywhere, wherever and however we are related to beings of every kind,  
identity makes its claim upon us—Heidegger*

## Chapter 4

## Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research and the research design adopted based on it. A brief review of the general assumptions is given and discussed. Based on the rationale set out in this discussion, the research has adopted a constructivist interpretative paradigm. The chapter explains my positionality as a researcher in relation to this study and how it has had an impact on the study. The chapter explains the research methodology, including the strategies and methods of data collection and analysis. In addition, the chapter explains in detail the interdisciplinary framework of analysis developed<sup>242</sup>, which is one of the methodological contributions of this study.

### 4.2 Research Paradigm

The term paradigm generally refers to the ‘dominant framework in which research takes place’,<sup>243</sup> hence it determines the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the research studies. Thomas Kuhn popularised the term through his work entitled, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* where he described paradigms as a way to explain researchers’ beliefs about their approaches towards creating knowledge and paradigms affect what ‘we’ can know about the world, and world views itself changes when new paradigms emerge.<sup>244</sup> Egan Guba similarly defines a paradigm as ‘a basic set of beliefs that guides action’.<sup>245</sup> Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln state that a paradigm encompasses four concepts: axiology, epistemology, ontology and methodology. Epistemology is concerned with how one knows the world. Ontology deals with what the nature of reality is or how this is conceived, and the nature of human being in the world. Methodology explains what the best means are for gaining knowledge about the world. And Axiology discusses how the individual researcher can be a moral person in this world they explore.<sup>246</sup> In their broadest sense, paradigms are considered ‘as worldviews or all-encompassing ways of experiencing and thinking about the world, including beliefs about morals, values, and aesthetics’.<sup>247</sup> Paradigms are in a way

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<sup>242</sup> **The framework of analysis has been developed into paper and is accepted for publication : Lakshmi Priya Rajendran, Stephen Walker, Rosie Parnell (Oct 2014) ‘An interdisciplinary framework of analysis for understanding identity construction in multicultural urban spaces in Sheffield UK’, *Review of Social Studies, Special Issue: Methodology* , London Centre for Social Studies, UK (in press)**

<sup>243</sup> Michael Hammond and Jerry Wellington, *Research methods : the key concepts* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 116.

<sup>244</sup> Thomas S Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>245</sup> Egon G Guba, “The alternative paradigm dialogue,” in *The Paradigm dialogue* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), 17–30, 17.

<sup>246</sup> Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, *Handbook of qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2000), 157.

<sup>247</sup> David L. Morgan, “Paradigms Lost and Pragmatism Regained Methodological Implications of Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods,” *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 48–76, 50.

central in all research: Lincoln explained that adopting a paradigm permeates every aspect of a research inquiry.<sup>248</sup> Hence it is important in the beginning to question the research paradigm to be adopted in the research, as depending on the way a social phenomenon is understood and framed, it will have a great impact on the definition and process of the study and the research findings.

Positivism and Postpositivism share a common ontological view that social reality is external and objective. Hence, axiologically the researcher and the researched are separated, the latter taking an *etic* stance or adopting the outsider perspective. Epistemologically, they support a scientific approach to generate acceptable knowledge. It involves statistical tests of the theories in their research process with different philosophical assumptions. Positivist researchers aim towards generalisations, by conducting value-free research on social phenomena. Positivists believe that different researchers studying the same issue will develop similar results by employing statistical tests and applying a similar research process in investigating a large sample.<sup>249</sup> They believe in universal generalisation that can be applied across contexts.

Postpositivists argue for the idea of generalisation, particularly when observing the human role in social sciences, as they believe that the research outcome is based on social conditioning. Critical realists adopt this stance, which explains that studying any social reality requires it to be understood within a certain context that is responsible for the phenomena to exist. *Interpretivism* occupies the other extreme from postpositivism, and is in line with the thought of constructivism. Interpretivists believe that reality is constructed by social actors based on their respective backgrounds, assumption, conditioning and experiences, which combine to create the reality in the broader social context. Because these human perspectives and experiences are subjective, social reality may change and can have multiple perspectives.<sup>250</sup> The notion of single reality is therefore contested by interpretivists. Interpretivist researchers engage themselves with participants of their research to understand the social world from their perspective and work with rich qualitative data. From a diametrically opposite position to the generalisation adopted by post-positivist researchers, Lawrence Newman states that interpretivists employ a narrative form of analysis to explain in detail the particular social reality observed, which is termed the

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<sup>248</sup> Yvonna S Lincoln, "The making of a constructivist: A remembrance of transformations past," in *The Paradigm dialogue*, ed. Egon G Guba (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), 67–87.

<sup>249</sup> John W Creswell, *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (Los Angeles, Calif. [u.a.]: SAGE, 2013).

<sup>250</sup> Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2011).

idiographic approach.<sup>251</sup> Hence the basis on which knowledge is tested in the positivist and interpretivist paradigm is distinct. Where positivist researchers believe in the replicability of research findings, Interpretivist researchers aim to unravel the implicit and real meanings of social phenomena. Axiologically, interpretivist researchers take the stance of the *emic* or insider perspective, studying social reality from the perspective of the participants in their research. This leads to the fact that experiences and values of both research participants and researchers greatly influence the research process and outcome.

*Pragmatism* is another branch of research in which the researcher begins with the research question to decide on their research framework. Pragmatist researchers view research philosophy as a continuum, rather than providing options that stand in opposite positions, and accept the notion that objectivist and subjectivist perspectives are not mutually exclusive. Therefore a combination of ontology, epistemology and axiology is acceptable to approach and understand social phenomena. They emphasise that approach which addresses the research best. Pragmatist researchers support working with both quantitative and qualitative data that facilitate a better understanding of social phenomenon.

These various research positions, attitudes and paradigms are summarised in Table 4.1 below:

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<sup>251</sup> William Lawrence Neuman, *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2011).

Philosophical position	Research Paradigms			
	Positivism	Postpositivism	<i>Interpretivism (Constructivism)</i>	<i>Pragmatism</i>
<i>Ontology: the position on the nature of reality</i>	External, objective and independent of social actors	Objective. Exist independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence, but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist)	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple	External, multiple, view chosen to best achieve an answer to the research question
<i>Epistemology: the view on what constitutes acceptable knowledge</i>	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on explaining within a context or contexts	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, the reality behind these details, subjective meanings and motivating actions	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data
<i>Axiology: the role of values in research and the researcher's stance</i>	Value-free and etic Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance	Value-laden and etic Research is value laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing	Value-bond and emic Research is value bond, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective	Value-bond and etic-emic Values play a large role in interpreting the results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view
<i>Research Methodology: the model behind the research process</i>	Quantitative	Quantitative or qualitative	Qualitative	Quantitative and qualitative (mixed or multi-method design)

**Table 4.1 Research Paradigms.** (Source: Lincoln, Yvonna S. 1990. "The making of a constructivist: A remembrance of transformations past." In *The Paradigm dialogue*, edited by Egon G Guba, 67–87. Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Saunders, Mark N. K, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill. 2012. *Research Methods for Business Students*. Harlow: Financial Times/ Prentice Hall.)

#### 4.2.1 *The Research Paradigm adopted in this thesis*

Thomas A. Schwandt states that an interpretive approach allows one to understand human actions to be ‘inherently meaningful’.<sup>252</sup> As Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein explain:

Interpretive practice engages both the hows and whats of the social reality; it is centred both in how people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds and in the configuration of meaning and institutional life that informs and shapes their reality-constituting activity.<sup>253</sup>

This research particularly focuses on the implicit meanings and principles underlying people’s spatial practices and experiences, and therefore has adopted an interpretive approach as it gives a greater scope in delving into the ‘how’ and ‘what’ of the factors that have an impact on identity constructions.

As people’s perception and experiences depend on diverse factors which include their personal and socio-cultural backgrounds, the ontological assumption is that although reality is multiple, I aim to gain knowledge and understanding of how reality is constructed by different people by delving deeper into their experiences and the meanings associated with them. Epistemologically, in this research I do not detach myself from my background (as an international student), as this knowledge is linked to the object of research (studying international students’ experiences) in such a way that it forms the crux in identifying significant relationships between the participants (international students), spatial practices/behaviour, and their underlying motivations that enable identity negotiations within the context of the research. Furthermore, in identity studies, understanding the complex social phenomenon of identity constructions is often limited by disciplinary boundaries and is better understood through an interdisciplinary concepts (refer section 3.2). Hence I have developed an interdisciplinary framework facilitating a deeper study of people’s experiences and meaning attachment processes. The framework of analysis which is a methodological contribution of this thesis is explained in detail towards the end of this chapter. The epistemological knowledge for this research is constructed through the empathetic investigation of the complex identity phenomenon, facilitated by an interdisciplinary approach working with rich qualitative data of people’s place experiences developed in this research. The

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<sup>252</sup> Thomas A. Schwandt, “Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, Hermeneutics, and Social Constructionism,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, vol. 2 (CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2000), 189–213, 191.

<sup>253</sup> Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, “Analyzing Interpretive Practice,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 487–508.488

knowledge is developed from the view point that being an international student researcher, my assumptions and conditioning become intrinsically linked to the object of investigation and plays an important role in the research. As a result, my values and beliefs influence the research outcome, which in turn has an impact on the validity of this research.

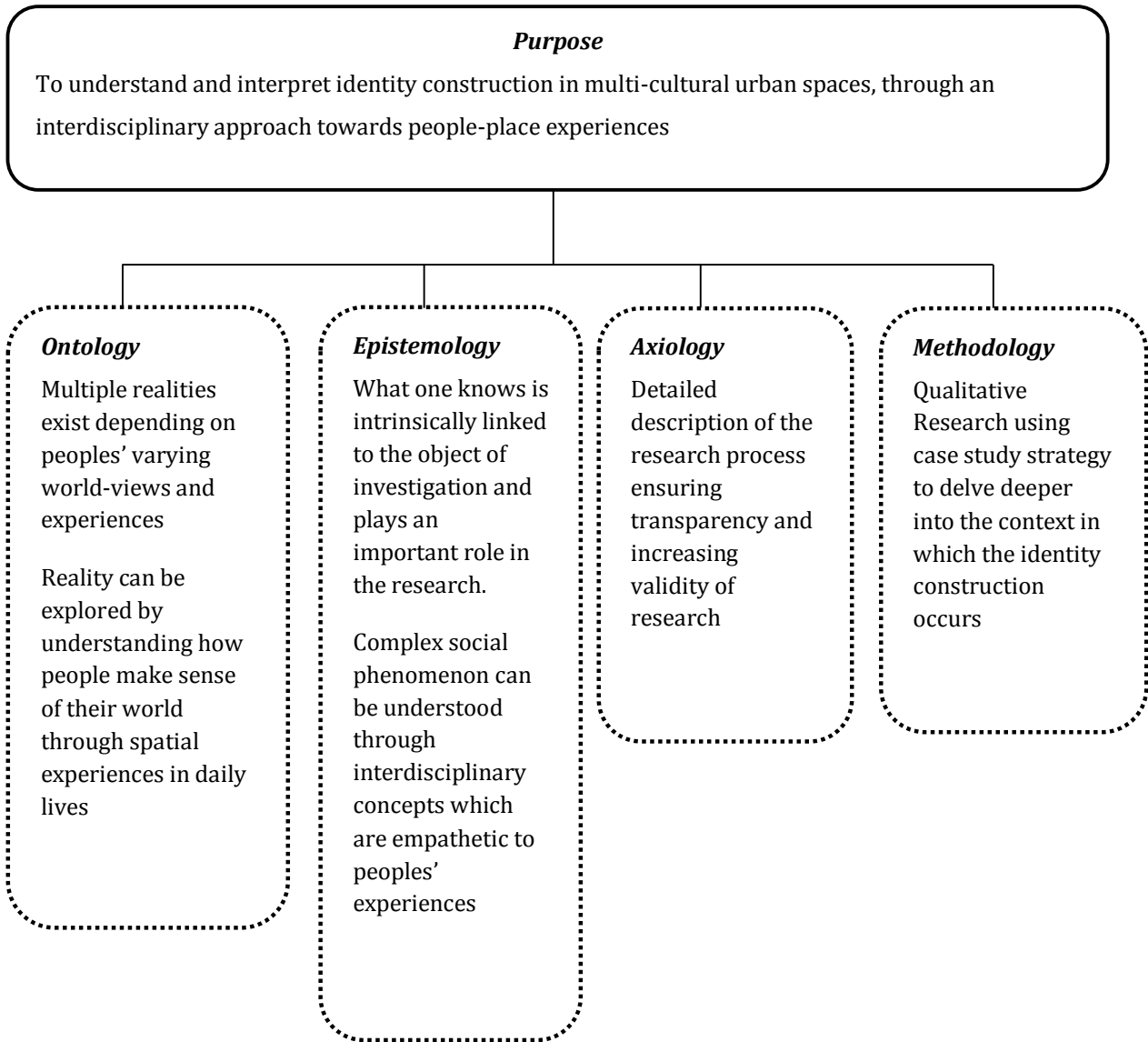
The axiological position adopted stresses the careful delineation of the research process to increase the validity of the research findings. Aspect of this are explained in detail later in the thesis include the following:

- Participant sampling purpose and method (in section 6.2.2)
- Data collection and analysis methods (in section 6.2.2)
- Defining the scope and context of the research (Chapter 5)
- Assumptions guiding my interpretation in this research (in section 6.2.4 )
- My position as a researcher, its impact on this research and validity (in section 4.5)

Explaining the above aspects in research, I aim to bring transparency in my research project. The methodological choice for this research is qualitative, using a case study strategy to delve deeper into the context in research questions.

Based on the purpose of this research, the various beliefs systems and the rationale in which this research has been situated (according to the framework of options explained above) is given as an illustration below (see Fig 4.1 )





**Figure 4.1 Research Paradigms adopted for this research.** (Source: Drawn by the author)

## 4.3 Research Methodology

### 4.3.1 Qualitative research

The domain of this research is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional with complex overlapping layers of people's experiences in urban contexts. It adopts a qualitative research methodology, as this enables the study of such complex social phenomenon from various perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln define qualitative research as 'multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them'.<sup>254</sup> Qualitative inquiry's strength to unravel the complexities of the context and the subject is also cited by Joseph A. Maxwell as a key reason why it is particularly useful.<sup>255</sup> These various qualities can be summarised as allowing or promoting:

- Understanding the meaning for the participants in the study, of the events, situations and actions they are involved with and of the accounts they give of their lives and experiences
- Understanding the particular context within which the participant acts, and the influence of this context on their action.
- Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences and generating new theories about the latter.
- Understanding the processes by which events and actions takes place.
- Developing causal explanations

While choosing the methodology for any research it is important to select that paradigm whose assumptions are best matched to the phenomenon being investigated.<sup>256</sup> Adopting a qualitative research methodology is clearly advantageous in addressing the complexity of the identity and multicultural context in this research study. John W. Creswell enumerates common characteristics of qualitative research which are relevant here.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, "Introduction :The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2000), 1–28, 2.

<sup>255</sup> Joseph A. Maxwell, "Designing a Qualitative Study," in *Handbook of applied social research methods*, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog (Thousand Oaks [u.a.: Sage, 1998), 69–100, 75.

<sup>256</sup> Egon G. Guba, "Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries," *ECTJ* 29, no. 2 (June 1, 1981): 75–91,76 doi:10.1007/BF02766777.

<sup>257</sup> John W Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 37-79, 48.

- **Natural Setting:** gathering information by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context
- **Research as key instrument:** Data is collected by the researcher themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants.
- **Multiple sources of Data:** Qualitative researchers gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations and documents rather than relying on single source of data.
- **Inductive data analysis:** building patterns, categories and themes from bottom up approach from observation stage to the theory formulation.
- **Participants' meanings:** focus on learning the meaning participants have about the issue that is studied
- **Emergent Design:** the research process is emergent as throughout the study, different phases are subjected to changes and shifts.
- **Theoretical lens:** often a specific lens is used to view the studies such as concept of culture which might be central to ethnography.
- **Interpretive inquiry:** Qualitative research is a form of enquiry in which researcher make an interpretation of everything they encounter during the study.
- **Holistic account:** Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the issues under study by reporting multiple perspectives and various factors involved in a situation.

All the above characteristics of qualitative research methodology enables the interpretation of complex spatial experiences with implicit meanings attached to them which defines or has an impact upon the identity construction processes. Stressing the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry, a qualitative research methodology is particularly relevant for this research as it delves into the urban spatial experiences of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds which invariably involve multifarious factors influencing and impacting identity constructions. Qualitative research seeks to answer questions about how social experience is created and given meaning,<sup>258</sup> facilitating the understanding of its spatial manifestations for this

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<sup>258</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, "Introduction :The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research.",8.

research. To understand the concept of identity from the 'what,' 'how' and 'why' of people's experiential understanding of the urban context, qualitative research is the most appropriate methodology.

### 4.3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the 'basic structure of a research project, the plan for carrying out an investigation focussed on a question'.<sup>259</sup> Research design explains how the research is going to be conducted that will answer a specific research question. It is suggested that the purpose of the research and the questions which the research aims to answer serves as a guide to develop the research design.<sup>260</sup> The key principles of any research design are threefold:<sup>261</sup>

- There should be a clearly conceived question, problem or hypothesis.
- The methods proposed should be likely to produce robust data analysis, which will address the research problem.
- The approach taken should be in line with ethical research practice.

Research design includes the logical sets of procedure developed to address the research question in such a way as to increase the validity of the research. A credible research design constructively links the purpose of the research, the research question, methodology and methods meaningfully and constructively enabling to 'provide clear explanation of the phenomenon under study and controls all possible biases or confounds that could cloud or distort the research finding'.<sup>262</sup>

This interactive quality of various components in research design is particularly important in a qualitative study, as Maxwell notes

In qualitative study, the activities of collecting and analysing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and dealing with

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<sup>259</sup> Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretive research design: concepts and processes* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 16.

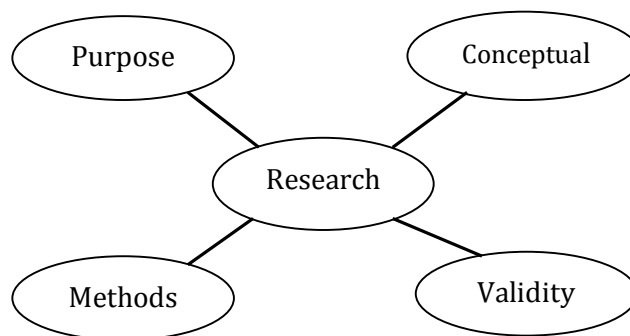
<sup>260</sup> Mark N. K Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business Students* (Harlow: Financial Times/ Prentice Hall, 2012); Robert K Yin, *Applications of case study research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2012).

<sup>261</sup> Suki Ali and Moira Kelly, "Ethics and Social Research," in *Researching society and culture*, ed. Clive Seale, 3rd ed. (London: SAGE, 2012), 115–42, 130.

<sup>262</sup> Leonard Bickman, Debra J. Rog, and Terry E. Hedrick, "Applied Research Design," in *Handbook of applied social research methods*, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog (Thousand Oaks [u.a.: Sage, 1998), 5–37,11.

validity threats are surely going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others.<sup>263</sup>

Maxwell suggests an interactive model of research design (see Fig 4.2) which consists of the components of research study and the ways in which these components affect and are affected by one another. What is distinctive in this model is the relationship among the components, which form an integrated and interacting whole with each component closely tied to several others, rather than being linked in a linear or cyclic sequence.



**Figure 4.2 An interactive model for Research Design.** (Source: Joseph A. Maxwell, “Designing a Qualitative Study,” in *Handbook of applied social research methods*, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog (Thousand Oaks.: Sage, 1998), 69–100)

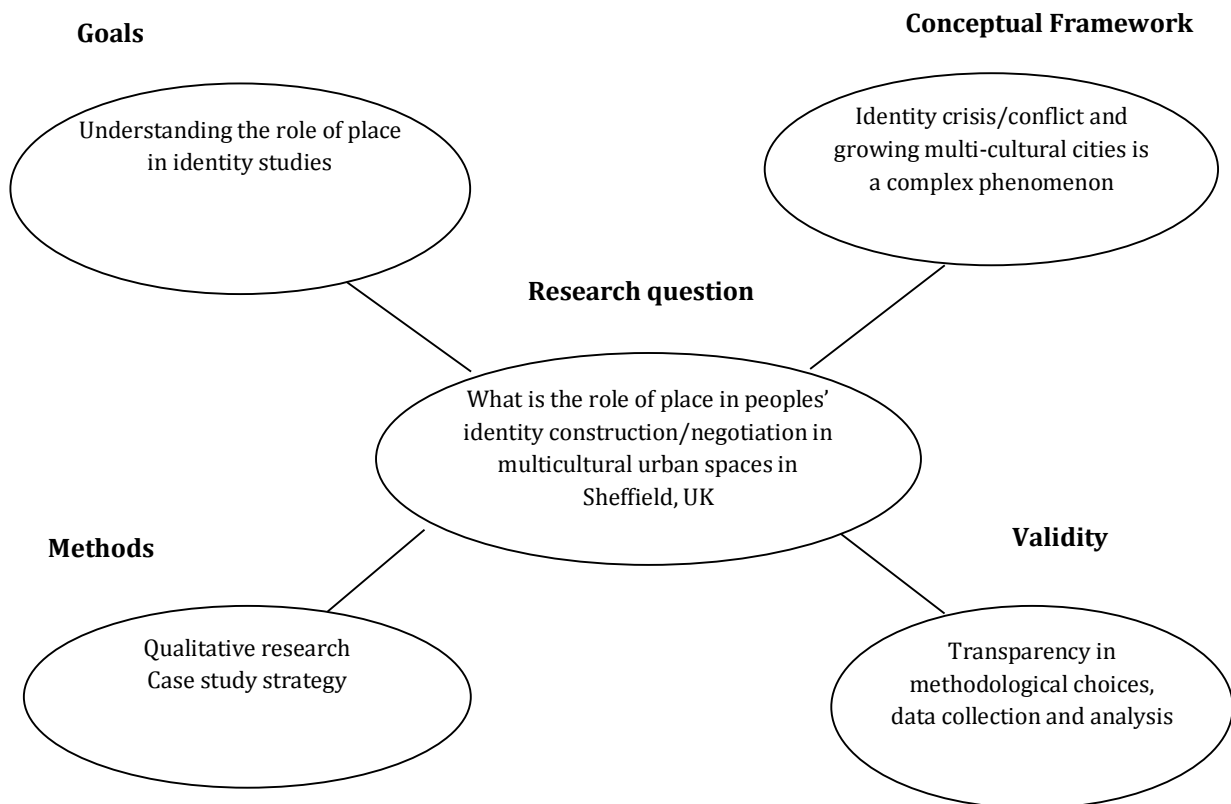
Although there are many other connections, the lines between the components in Fig 4.2 are considered the most important and represent two-way connections of influence and implication. The model is particularly useful as it identifies the various components in a research project and the significant issues based on which decisions needs to be made. In this way, the model helps in clearly communicating and justifying the major research design decisions and the connections among these.<sup>264</sup> Maxwell’s model is used as a guide in developing the research design for my study (see Fig 4.3), where I link the various steps taken in the research process to address the demands of my research question, which is to address the complexity of studying identity constructions and negotiations in multi-cultural urban context. The research question is strongly is situated within the conceptual framework for this research which is developed around the identity crisis/conflict experienced in contemporary urban cities with the increasing multi-cultural nature of societies. The goals of the research reflect both the existing knowledge gap and the important perspective adopted in addressing the research questions, which is to seek an

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<sup>263</sup> Maxwell, “Designing a Qualitative Study.”, 70.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid, 75.

interdisciplinary understanding of socio-spatial aspects of identity construction. From the standpoint of an interpretive constructivist paradigm, with the adoption of a qualitative approach, this research employed a case study research strategy to capture the complexity of the phenomenon which the research question addressed. The research aimed to provide maximum transparency of the methods and the analysis process to increase the validity of the study.



**Figure 4.3 An interactive model for Research Design in this research.** ( Source: adapted from Joseph A. Maxwell, "Designing a Qualitative Study," in Handbook of applied social research methods, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog (Thousand Oaks.: Sage, 1998), 69–100)

### 4.3.3 Case study Research Strategy

Case studies have become well accepted as one of the common research strategies in the social sciences. They allow the researcher flexibility in retaining the characteristic nature of a real-life context while studying empirical events. Robert. K. Yin describes case study 'as an empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, in which multiple sources

of evidence are used'.<sup>265</sup> As researchers struggle to capture the complexities of phenomenon within its context, case study as a methodology is used to explore a single phenomenon in a natural setting using a variety of methods to obtain in-depth knowledge.<sup>266</sup> Both in terms of tackling the complexity of people's experiences and employing interdisciplinary approaches and/or methods, I have chosen case study as my research strategy in this research project.

Apart from accommodating different research methods for studying a particular phenomenon, Yin states that for adopting case study as a research strategy there are three conditions that need to be satisfied:<sup>267</sup>

- The type of research questions posed (if the question takes 'how' or 'why' form)

The main question of this research is aims to understand how identities are constructed and negotiated through the place experiences in multicultural urban environment. The sub-questions deal with studying how contemporary spatial practices of international students in Sheffield. How does the socio-spatial aspects of people and place experiences impact identity constructions of people . What is the significance of place in understanding identity construction in social psychology and human geography . From the research aims and objectives it can be noted that with the majority of questions falling under 'how' type, a case study strategy thus fits well for this research

- The extent of control the researcher has over actual behavioural events

This research questions people's experiential understanding of spaces in multi-cultural environments and as a researcher I do not have any influence on their behaviour in spaces, as the participants of the research respond based on their past and present experiences of their spatial encounters.

- The degree of focus on contemporary issues

The research aims to address the contemporary issues that bear on identity constructions/conflict (which was explained in detail in Chapter 1) that arise from the increasing multi-cultural nature of societies.

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<sup>265</sup> Robert K Yin, *Case study research: design and methods* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1984), 23.

<sup>266</sup> Jill Collis and Roger Hussey, *Business research: a practical guide for undergraduate & postgraduate students* (Basingstoke, UK; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16.

<sup>267</sup> Yin, *Case study research*, 5.

In terms of the underpinning interpretivist/constructivist philosophical views of this research, the research strategy adopted was aimed towards the unravelling of implicit factors which influence or have an impact upon the phenomenon of identity construction under study. Case study research clearly compliments the philosophical position of this research as it reveals the various factors that are socio-cultural and spatial that interacts and influence identity concepts which is the subject of study. In other words, this research adopted an instrumental case study approach to look into the case studied 'in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed'<sup>268</sup>, which helps in revealing the various factors mentioned earlier that are implicit yet crucial for addressing the research questions.

Within the case studies strategy, pilot studies were employed as a tool to refine the main case study approach and analysis. Three pilot case studies were conducted, which involved participant observation, field studies, and interviews involving sketching tasks which aimed to understand the overall people's perception of the urban environment, identity and everyday life and also pertaining to specific places in Sheffield. Each of the pilot case studies are discussed in detail in Chapter 5, though it is important to mention here that inferences from pilot case studies were used effectively to refine the main case studies in terms of the research questions and methods of data collection and analysis, site selection and photos that were used in the main case study interviews.

#### *4.3.3.1 Data collection*

The pilot studies and the main case studies involved various data collection methods: interviews, participant observation and photo elicitation. The suitability of these methods is discussed below:

- *Interviews*

Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values—things that cannot be necessarily observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire. Open-ended and flexible questions are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions, and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions. As the participants are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, qualitative interviewing is a particularly suitable method, as it is a flexible medium allowing the interviewees to speak in their own voices creating rich data for exploring significant relationships of the participants spatial experiences and identity constructions.

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid,15.



- *Participant observation*

Participant observation practiced in research enhances the quality of data obtained and interpretation of that data, thus it is both a data collection and an analytic tool.<sup>269</sup> It is extremely important to enter the field study without any preconceived notions about the behaviour of the people that might be observed. Hence an unstructured observation technique with the researcher's role as a passive participant was chosen while conducting field work, as it helps in gathering rich information of conscious and unconscious behavioural patterns of people in the built environment. Data was recorded in the form of sketches, photographs and field notes.

- *Photo elicitation*

Visual research methods allow the researcher to penetrate deeper into phenomena pertaining to peoples' experiences. Within the domain of social sciences and particularly in studying place meanings, Stedman et al point out that visual approaches have been 'under-utilized, relative to their potential contribution'.<sup>270</sup> Bolton et al in their work *Picture This: Researching Child Workers* state that photographs offer an opportunity to gain not just more but different insights into social phenomenon, which research methods relying on oral, aural or written data cannot provide.<sup>271</sup> Combining photos with interviews gives detailed information about how informants see their world and it allows the interviewees to reflect on things they do not usually think about.<sup>272</sup> This was extremely useful for recording data with implicit meanings that are imperative for developing discussions in the later stage of the study. Photos were also used as a tool for prompting participants' responses and elaborate meanings of their relationship with the environment.

#### 4.4 Framework of analysis

Developing from the discussion on the need for interdisciplinary approaches in identity research in section 3.2, an interdisciplinary framework of analysis is developed for this research. Dealing with data which contains multiple layers of complex information related to people's spatial

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<sup>269</sup> Kathleen Musante DeWalt and Billie R DeWalt, *Participant observation: a guide for fieldworkers* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

<sup>270</sup> Bernardo Hernandez, Carmen. M Hidalgo, and M Thomas Ruiz, "Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Research on Place Attachment," in *Place attachment advances in theory, methods and applications*, ed. Lynne Catherine Manzo and Patrick Devine-Wright (New York: Routledge, 2014), 125–137, 128.

<sup>271</sup> Angela Bolton, Christopher Pole, and Phillip Mizen, "Picture This: Researching Child Workers," *Sociology* 35, no. 2 (May 1, 2001): 501–18, doi:10.1177/S0038038501000244.

<sup>272</sup> Patricia C. Albers and William R. James, "Private and Public Images: A Study of Photographic Contrasts in Postcard Pictures of Great Basin Indians, 1898–1919," *Visual Anthropology* 3, no. 2–3 (1990): 343–66, doi:10.1080/08949468.1990.9966538.

practices requires a strong analytical framework to enable significant interrelationships between several factors to emerge. The various interdisciplinary concepts which were used to develop the analytical framework and the various stages in which data analysis is carried out is explained below. The various assumptions that have been made for data interpretation while interpreting the qualitative data are also discussed.

#### ***4.4.1. Relevant concepts***

##### *4.4.1.1 Phenomenology: Interpretative phenomenological analysis*

Research into identity construction in everyday life largely focuses on the implicit meanings of perceptual and spatial experiences of people. For this reason, the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method is considered to be of great significance, as it explores and understands the lived experience of a specified phenomenon, providing a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their experiences.<sup>273</sup> IPA research follows philosopher Edmund Husserl's advice when he urged phenomenologists to go 'back to the things themselves', and denies any attempt to fix experiences in predefined or overly abstract categories. Focussing on the phenomenological understanding of lived experiences, IPA is particularly important for this research as it is context-dependent and contingent upon social, historical and cultural perspectives which have a great impact on identity.<sup>274</sup> IPA as a method enables understandings of peoples' place experiences that are deeper and unselfconscious, allowing the research to capture the complexity of people-place relationship that is crucial for this study.

##### *4.4.1.2 Human geography: Relph's seven levels of experiential involvement/identification in place*

Relph explains that the essence of a place is embedded 'in the experience of an inside that is distinct from an outside; more than anything else this is what sets places apart in space and defines a particular system of physical features, activities and the meanings'.<sup>275</sup> He offers an interesting and important means to understand place experiences in terms of peoples' experience of being 'inside' or 'outside' a place. The notion of being 'inside' or 'outside' of a place becomes intrinsically connected the extent one identifies or feels a belonging to that place. Relph states that 'the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place'.<sup>276</sup> The

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<sup>273</sup> Jonathan A. Smith, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis : Theory, Method and Research* (Los Angeles, [Calif.] ; London: SAGE, 2009).

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, ed. Allen J Scott - series editor, 2nd ed. (Pion Ltd., 2008).

<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 49.

dynamic changes in contemporary urban living has reconceptualised peoples' involvement and relationship with places. Relph's seven modes of experiential involvement/ identification in places offer the required depth in the experiential concepts with different levels and layers for comprehending the complex spatiality and place engagement in contemporary urban environments. The following table 4.2 provides a brief explanation of the various levels of Relph's classification.

<b>Types of identification</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Existential Insideness	The deepest involvement in place where a person feels being part of the place. The person feels at home.
Existential Outsideness	The person feels out of place. There is no involvement and the place gives a feeling of alienation, of strangeness.
Objective Outsideness	Involving deliberate distancing. The place is like an object of study, experienced based on reason, surveyed scientifically and logically.
Incidental Outsideness	Involving the situation where place is just a backdrop, as when the person is heading somewhere else
Behavioural Insideness	When the deliberate experience of place is expected, there is a set of elements, views, landmarks which form the new place.
Empathetic Insideness	When a person from outside shows empathy with what the place demonstrates as the expression of those who created it and live in it
Vicarious Insideness	A second-hand feeling, of indirect experience, the person is transported to the place via image, painting, film, mass media.

**Table 4.2 Relph's different modes of experiencing places.** (Source: adapted from Seamon, D., 1996. A Singular Impact: Edward Relph's Place and Placelessness, 7(3), pp.5-8.)

#### 4.4.1.3 Social psychology: Motivated Identity Construction theory

The concept of 'motive' brings out both explicit and implicit factors that govern peoples' spatial practices and experiences in a place. This research incorporates Motivated Identity Construction Theory within the framework of analysis. According to this theory, there are six motives of identity construction in people (distinctiveness, meaning, belongingness, continuity, self-esteem and efficacy) which were substantiated by recent studies in social psychology. Originally these motives are fundamentally related to how people develop their identity with the different group of people (see section 3.4) but in this research these six motives are interpreted as:

- *Distinctiveness*: How much does being part of a place give a unique sense of people's experience?

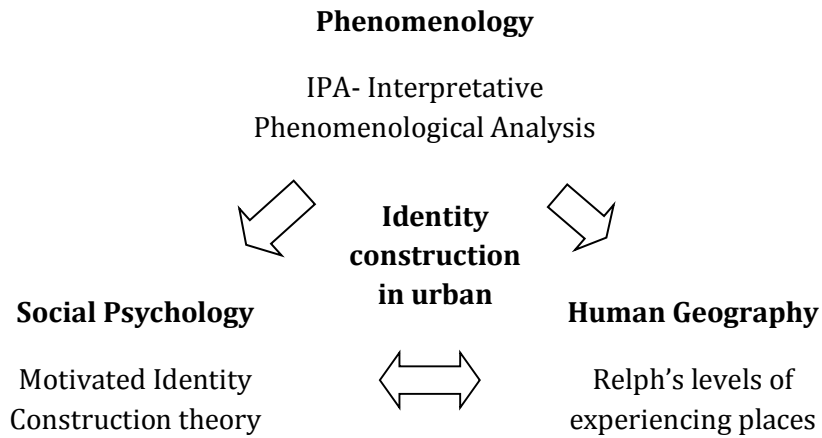
- *Meaning*: How much does being part of a place give people a sense of meaningfulness to their life?
- *Continuity*: How much does being part of a place make people feel that their past, present and future are connected?
- *Belonging*: How much does being part of a place make people feel that they are included or accepted?
- *Self-esteem*: How much does being part of a place make people see themselves positively?
- *Efficacy*: How much does being part of a place make people feel efficient, competent and capable?

Though these six motives may not be comprehensive,<sup>277</sup> they facilitate this research by providing valuable insights into the impact of spatial dimensions on these identity motives.

The theories and concepts discussed above are integrated to form an interdisciplinary framework of analysis for this research (see Fig 4.4). In the framework, phenomenology is employed as a methodological approach to extract or demystify people's complex spatial experiences, which are then analysed for the different modes of identification. Finally, the various emerging themes and patterns in people's experiences are analysed for their connections with the various identity motives discussed above, which are reconceptualised or redefined for an architectural vocabulary.

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<sup>277</sup> Matt Easterbrook and Vivian L Vignoles, "Different groups, different motives: identity motives underlying changes in identification with novel groups," *Personality & social psychology bulletin* 38, no. 8 (August 2012): 1066–80, doi:10.1177/0146167212444614.



**Figure 4.4 Interdisciplinary Framework of work of analysis.** (Source: Drawn by the author)

The following illustration (Fig 4.5) sets out my research methodology diagrammatically, showing the various stages and flow of the research process.

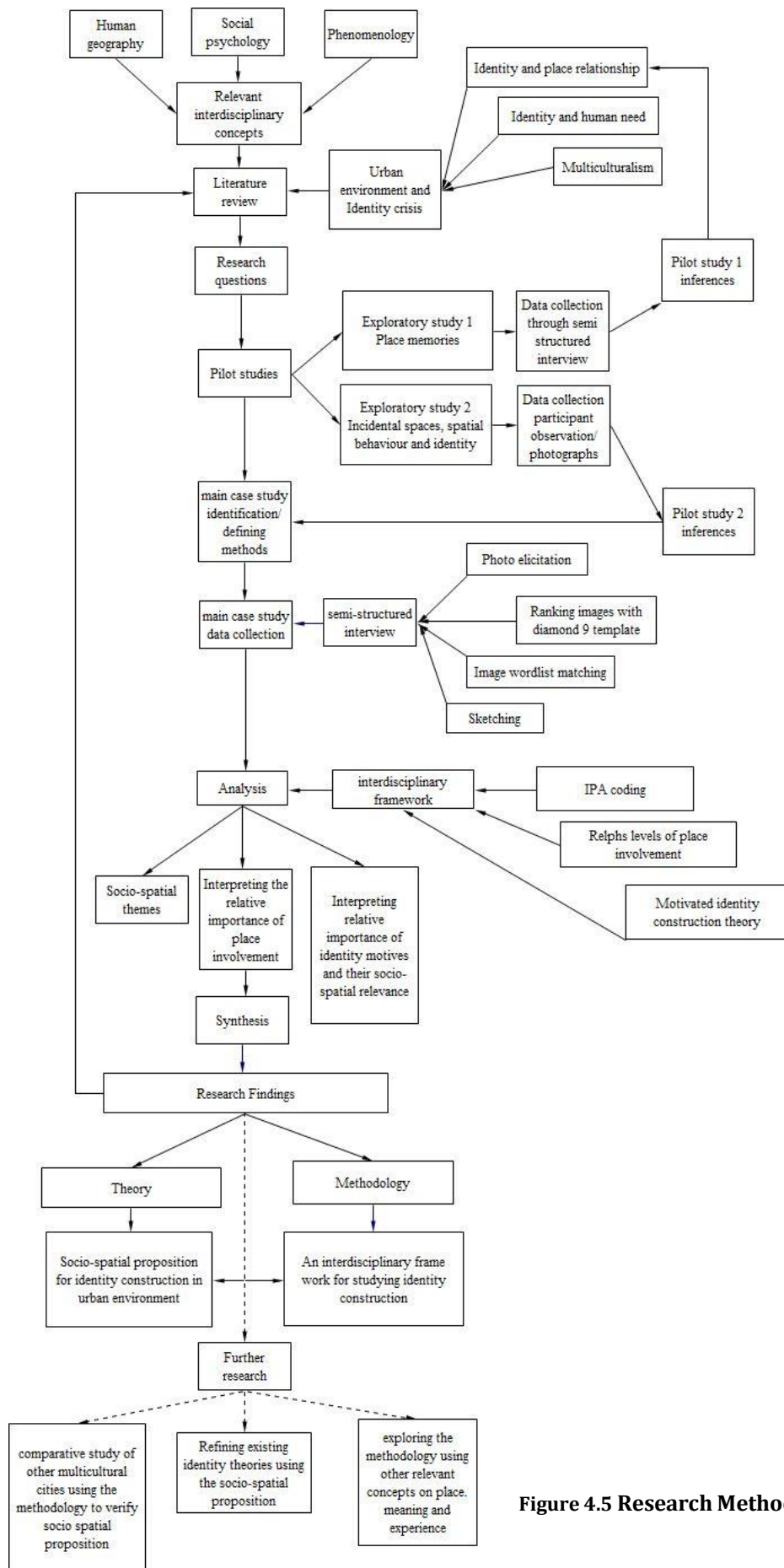


Figure 4.5 Research Methodology.(Source: Drawn by the author)

## 4.5 Positionality

The cross-cultural and qualitative nature of the research meant it was very important to be conscious about my own positionality throughout the research process. At the very outset of this research, being an international student studying international student participants' experiences, my own role as a researcher was more emic—as an insider, regardless of my specific ethnic background. From an interpretivist/constructivist point of view, my emic stance enabled an empathetic understanding of the participants' experiences, and has helped me particularly in probing responses from the participants in the interview sessions, which resulted in the rich data collected during this research. As Maykut and Morehouse have observed, this emic position is not without its challenges:

The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand.<sup>278</sup>

Mindful of this paradox, throughout this research, one crucial question that I have carefully reflected upon is “How am I influencing the process and the results?” In this thesis, I have consistently addressed the thoughts related to this self-reflection by explaining the personal implications of research decisions made at various stages. This includes for instance the introduction chapter, where I delineate my interests in the domain of people-place and identity research, my justification for the methodology I have adopted, and present the various assumptions that have guided my interpretation of the research data. While interpreting the narrative interviews, efforts have been made constantly to be aware of my own role as an architect and researcher in the process of interpretation of data and drawing of inferences from them. As a result, analysis is made as transparent as possible by presenting the assumptions and process of interpreting the social and spatial aspects of data by describing in detail the framework of analysis and the process of this research.

## 4.6 Validity and reliability

The two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned with while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study are Validity and Reliability.<sup>279</sup> These are related to Lincoln and Guba's question: ‘How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences

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<sup>278</sup> Pamela S Maykut and Richard Morehouse, *Beginning qualitative research: a philosophic and practical guide* (London; Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press, 1994), 123.

<sup>279</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (Thousand Oaks, Calif. [etc.]: Sage, 2002).

that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?’<sup>280</sup> This research adopts the quality standard proposed by Lincoln and Guba in terms of Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability. The following Table 4.3 sets out to show how these four aspects are addressed in this research to ensure rigour and quality.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Positivist/Post positivist enquiry</b>	<b>Constructivist inquiry</b>	<b>Steps adopted in this research</b>
<i>Truth Value</i>	<i>Internal validity</i> Equivalence of data of enquiry and phenomena they represent	<i>Credibility</i> prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and/or member checking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting an emic stance</li> <li>• Disseminating in conferences for unbiased feedback on methods and choices</li> </ul>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>External validity</i> Generalizability	<i>Transferability</i> Thick description of context to assess similarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separate chapter describing in detail the context of the case studies</li> <li>• Detailed description of the methodological choices and philosophical positioning</li> </ul>
<i>Consistency</i>	<i>Reliability</i> Instruments must produce stable results	<i>Dependability</i> Trackability of expected instability of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detail description of the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation</li> <li>• Providing the various assumptions based on which data is interpreted</li> </ul>
<i>Neutrality</i>	<i>Objectivity</i> Methods explicated; replicable; investigator one-step removed from object of study	<i>Confirmability</i> Triangulation of data; practice of reflexivity by investigator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous reflection of role of researcher throughout the research process</li> </ul>

**Table 4.3 Validity and Reliability in this research.**

<sup>280</sup> Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1985), 290.



Lincoln and Guba state that: ‘Since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]’.<sup>281</sup> The methodological rigour is considered to be crucial in determining validity in qualitative research. A similar notion of rigour is echoed by Martin Davies, who states:

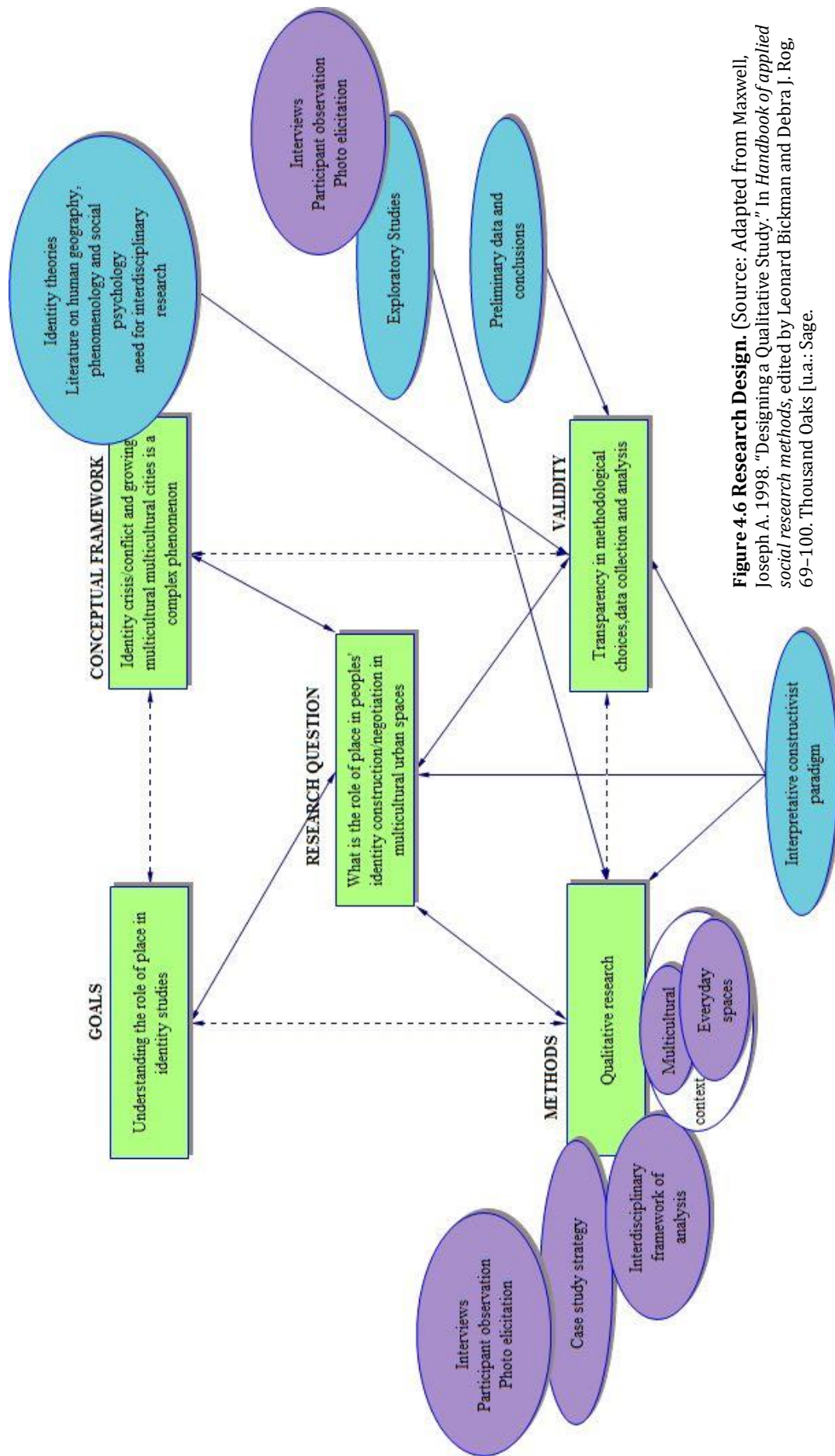
Because qualitative researchers do not normally employ any formal or precise systems of measurement, the concept of reliability is related to the rigour with which the researcher has approached the tasks of data collection and analysis and the care with which the report describes in detail the methods that have been employed —including, especially, some discussion of how critical decisions were made. Often, the term ‘reliability’ in this sense is equated with methodological ‘accuracy’.<sup>282</sup>

By following this definition of reliability, the research strives to establish clearly the reasons for the methodological choices, data collection methods and analysis. The research conducted several pilot studies which were used to refine the research questions and methods for the main case studies. The research also developed an analytical framework which is delineated for understanding the significance of the particular framework for this research. To support the validity of this research, the methodological choices and analysis were presented at various international conferences which included both discipline specific and interdisciplinary platforms and feedback from these events was used to refine the methods for the case studies. The research provides the ‘thick description’ of the context of case studies which enables the reader to evaluate the extent to which inferences of the research are transferable to other similar contexts. The overall research design developed for this research is illustrated in Fig 4.6 below. The illustration is based on Maxwell’s interactive model discussed earlier in this chapter. The research design shows the various contextual factors (coded in blue) that influenced the important aspects of the research design; Research questions, Methods, Validity, Conceptual Framework and the goals of this research.

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<sup>281</sup> Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1985), 316.

<sup>282</sup> Martin Davies, *Doing a successful research project: using qualitative or quantitative methods* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 241.



**Figure 4.6 Research Design.** (Source: Adapted from Maxwell, Joseph A. 1998. "Designing a Qualitative Study." In *Handbook of applied social research methods*, edited by Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog, 69–100. Thousand Oaks [u.a.]: Sage.

## **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter explained the research design and methodology employed in this research. The first sections of the chapter discussed the philosophical standpoint from which this research is undertaken. This chapter then explained how the research design is shaped by the qualitative framework and the interpretivist/constructivist stance. The detailed description of research design was provided to increase the transparency of the research study. The methods adopted in the research were explained for their appropriateness for this research, which addresses the challenges of ensuring rigour in qualitative research. As a question of validity is always debated in qualitative research, the chapter demonstrated how validity has been sought by providing an overview of the research methods and the entire process of the research. The chapter also explained the analytic framework that has been developed, and which is crucial in this research, bringing together potential interdisciplinary concepts as well as facilitating the analysis of the complex data. The final section of the chapter addressed the issues of positionality and validity, which orients the reader towards understanding this research within a framework set by the researcher.

*Part III*

# CASE STUDIES, ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

*A knowledge of places is an indispensable link in the chain of knowledge*

—Prince

## Chapter 5

## Exploratory Case studies

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter narrows down from the wider research context of multiculturalism explaining more specifically the research case study context<sup>283</sup> identified which is the everyday urban spaces in the multicultural city, and explicates the importance of spatial practices that occur in these everyday spaces and their crucial role in understanding identity constructions and negotiations. Furthermore, the characteristic nature of everyday spaces chosen for the case study is explained. Before conducting the main case studies, two exploratory case studies were conducted to explore the relationship between people and place in urban situations and their spatial practices in everyday urban spaces. The first exploratory study was aimed towards understanding the relationship people perceive between place and identity. The second focussed on the spatial practices of people in everyday urban spaces. The inferences from the two pilot cum exploratory studies, and how they informed the overall research questions and the main case study, are discussed. The exploratory case studies were also used to identify appropriate methods for data collection and analysis for the main case study, which are also explained in this chapter.

### 5.2 Everyday context

#### 5.2.1 *Everyday life and the urban environment*

At a superficial level, the everyday involves ordinary experiences and routines that are taken for granted to such an extent that it has almost become invisible. But at a more philosophical level, 'everyday life has been theorized as the sustaining ground, matrix and foundation for other social practices'.<sup>284</sup> Often it is 'the utterly ordinary that reveals a fabric of space and time defined by a complex realm of social practices—a conjuncture of accident, desire and habit'.<sup>285</sup> Some concepts of everyday life are worth introducing in this section as they guide the discussion towards the need for understanding urban built environment in the context of everyday life and the interactions it supports.

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<sup>283</sup> **Part of the research context has been published : Lakshmi Priya Rajendran (Nov 2013) 'Everyday landscape and meaning in urban living', *Agathos: An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol 4-2. pp.120-131, ISSN 2069 – 1025.**

<sup>284</sup> Barry Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life: Toward a Heterology of the Ordinary," *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2–3 (January 2004): 160–80,165. doi:10.1080/0950238042000201464.

<sup>285</sup> Margaret Crawford, "Introduction," in *Everyday urbanism*, ed. John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008),14.

### 5.2.1.1. Essence

Henri Lefebvre's seminal work entitled *The Critique of Everyday Life* was central to the resurgence of academic interest in everyday experiences. Lefebvre emphasised everyday life as 'a festival'.<sup>286</sup> He stated, 'Man must be everyday or he will not be at all', and because of this he claimed that, '[a] revolution takes place when and only when people can no longer lead their daily lives'.<sup>287</sup> Lefebvre defined everyday life initially as follows: 'everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by "what is left over" after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis'.<sup>288</sup> Thereafter, he explained how this 'residual' content functioned within our overall existence:

Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a "technical vacuum" between one another which are filled by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, and their common ground.<sup>289</sup>

It is these relationships which Lefebvre mentions that help people define meanings, as they 'represent the standpoint of the totality'.<sup>290</sup> The relationship between groups and individuals in everyday life interact in a manner which in part escapes the specialized sciences. He says study of everyday life has 'human raw material as a proper subject which contributes towards achieving the totality-realization of the total man'.<sup>291</sup> French Marxist theorist, writer and film-maker Guy Debord, in one of his talks entitled *Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life*, noted that in a sense we are never outside of everyday life and we have to place everyday life at the centre of everything.<sup>292</sup> These notions transform considerations of everyday life from 'trivial' to more as a 'splendour,' and one understands how it potentially forms the basis of all specialisations of activities. Amidst the rapid pace of urban living and the dynamic changes of our physical world, everydayness can be seen as a 'positive continuity of endless repetitions',<sup>293</sup> that possess the power to reconstitute stability and meaning in the urban environment. The potential

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<sup>286</sup> Mary McLeod, "Henri Lefebvre's Critique of Everyday Life: An Introduction," in *Architecture of the everyday*, ed. Steven Harris and Deborah Berke (New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 17.

<http://www.contentreserve.com/TitleInfo.asp?ID={B762E1F8-356F-436B-9412-6C8C126BDBB6}&Format=50>.

<sup>287</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday life in the modern world* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), 45.

<sup>288</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of everyday life. Vol. I. Introduction*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1991), 97.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>290</sup> Guy Debord, "Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life," *Internationale Situationniste*, 1961, 103.

<sup>291</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of everyday life*, New ed. (London: Verso, 1991).252.

<sup>292</sup> Debord, "Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life," 98.

<sup>293</sup> Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life," 168.

transformation that everyday life can bring is especially relevant to architects, for whom it can offer clues to counter the 'banality and mediocrity of most of the built environment'.<sup>294</sup>

### 5.3.1.2 Complexities

Studying the domain of everyday life offers a 'rich repository of urban meaning'<sup>295</sup> and facilitates towards comprehending their spatial manifestation, but the main challenge lies in decoding its fundamental ambiguity.<sup>296</sup> The sense of ambiguity of the term is because it 'does not have an unequivocal or fixed referent'.<sup>297</sup> It is also utterly complex, with embedded, multiple and overlapping layers of complex social and spatial practices. The complexities have further deepened in the contemporary context, as

The everyday is covered by new stories and turbulent affectations of art, fashion and events veil ever eradicating the everyday blahs. Images, the cinema and television divert the everyday by at times offering up to its own spectacle or sometimes the spectacle of noneveryday: violence, death, catastrophe, the living of the kings and stars —those who we are led to believe defy everydayness.<sup>298</sup>

To understand this condition of the everyday, Lefebvre identified two 'simultaneous realities'<sup>299</sup> that co-exist within the everyday life: 'the quotidian, which is the timeless, humble repetitive natural rhythms of life, and the modern, the always new and constantly changing habits that are shaped by technology'.<sup>300</sup> The everyday urban environment demands that designers accept that spatial experiences exist around this duality. Lefebvre points out the reason for undesirable attitudes towards everyday life as difference in the ontological view of everyday, and he notes how

some treat every day with impatience; they want to change life and do it quickly, others believe that lived experience is neither important nor interesting and that instead of trying to understand it, it should be minimised, bracketed, to make way for science, technology, economic growth, etc.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> McLeod, "Henri Lefebvre's Critique of Everyday Life: An Introduction," 43.

<sup>295</sup> Crawford, "Introduction." 12.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>297</sup> Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life." 154.

<sup>298</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness," in *Architecture of the everyday*, ed. Deborah Berke and Steven Harris, trans. Christine Levich (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 32–37, 33.

<sup>299</sup> Crawford, "Introduction." 16.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>301</sup> Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness." 34.

### 5.3.1.3 Significance

Lefebvre's concepts of the everyday address themes intrinsically relevant to architecture, especially where he views everyday life as a methodological confrontation of both modern life and the past, but more importantly he determines the points where new forms are appearing, and which are rich in possibilities.<sup>302</sup> Though everyday life reflects the 'ordinary', yet ordinary is what the 'real' is,<sup>303</sup> which is why 'the everyday, established and consolidated, remains a sole surviving common sense referent and point of reference'.<sup>304</sup> As these points of reference remain quintessential for an existential understanding of the world, the everyday implores a spatial interpretation that alleviates spatial complexities of contemporary living. Everyday life embodies at once the most direct experience of oppression and the strongest potentialities of transformation,<sup>305</sup> so a careful study of everyday life, and the associated urban environment, proves to be a rich domain for delving into its spatial manifestations in everyday practices for this research.

### 5.3.2 Social meanings and needs

Quentin Stevens in his book *The Ludic City* explains that:

Urban experience and social needs are more than mere conceptual abstractions; they can be understood by looking at everyday life on the streets, as its specific and diverse qualities, at the meanings it might have for those who live it, and in particular at the complex tensions which arise between different needs, different meanings and different users in space.<sup>306</sup>

Amidst the increasing diversity of urban societies, the everyday urban environment defines the social life of people. It is through the exploration of and navigation through the everyday environments, 'the ordinary and unexceptional sites'<sup>307</sup> and consistent exchanges, that people learn of and contribute to the social meanings embedded in them. The 'ordinariness' of these environments allows 'social events to evolve spontaneously',<sup>308</sup> as people tend to exhibit staged behaviour in overly-designed urban environments. The spontaneity in everyday interactions produces a social ambience which Lefebvre described as follows:

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<sup>302</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of everyday life*, 251.

<sup>303</sup> Sandywell, "The Myth of Everyday Life." 152.

<sup>304</sup> Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness." 34.

<sup>305</sup> McLeod, "Henri Lefebvre's Critique of Everyday Life: An Introduction." 18.

<sup>306</sup> Quentin Stevens, *The ludic city: exploring the potential of public spaces* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 7.

<sup>307</sup> Upton, 'Architecture in Everyday Life', *New Literary History*, 707–723,720.

<sup>308</sup> Jan Gehl, *Life between buildings : using public space* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011), 21.



The form of the urban, its supreme reason, namely simultaneity and encounters, cannot disappear. As a place of encounters, focus of communication, and information, the urban becomes what it always was; place of desire, permanent disequilibrium, seat of the dissolution of normalities and constraints, the moment of play and unpredictable.<sup>309</sup>

The social ambience described by Lefebvre produces experiences that are ‘concrete, practical and alive’, encouraging the ‘discreteness yet inclusiveness of the individual and the social. This unity is the foundation of all society: a society is made up of individuals, and the individual is a social being, in and by the content of his life and the form of his consciousnesses.’<sup>310</sup> Similar views have been explained in earlier sections, especially in section 2.5 where Bauman’s views of identity were set out as an issue only when one is not aware or not clear about one’s position in the social setting: this reinforces the important link between identity and urban life and the significance of understanding urban socio-spatial complexities of everyday life.

### ***5.3.3 Identity crisis***

One of the most significant needs for understanding the everyday environment lies in its relation to the context of growing issues of identity crisis, alienation and displacement experienced today. These identity crises have a cascading effect which greatly affects social cohesion. The social psychologist Jan art Scholte notes that:

Globalization has tended to increase the sense of a fluid and fragmented self, particularly for persons who spend large proportions of their time in supraterritorial spaces, where multiple identities readily converge and create lost souls. Hybrid identities present significant challenges for the construction of community. How can deep and social bonds be forged when individuals have multiple and perhaps competing sense of self- and indeed often feel pretty unsettled in all of them?<sup>311</sup>

Scholte’s definition shows the extent to which the transformation of people’s spatial relation with the urban landscapes defines the complexity of identity constructions and its consequent effect on society. The everyday spatial practices of people help in developing the performative constructs<sup>312</sup> which facilitate in effectively rearticulating and anchoring themselves to places. Today people participate in multiple discrepant situations and discourses through which they ‘construct different partial and simultaneous worlds in which they move and their cultural

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<sup>309</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>310</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Introduction (Vol. 1 of 3) (Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. by John Moore, Special edition (Verso, 2008), 72.

<sup>311</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: a critical introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 253.

<sup>312</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender trouble : feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

construction of physical world springs not from one source and is not in one piece'.<sup>313</sup> It is through the process of everyday spatial performances that people inscribe their identity in the environment. When the spaces that are encountered do not accommodate these performances, new forms of interaction are created or adopted within the environment through spatial tactics—for instance appropriating space, creating spatial alternatives/options for use. Interestingly, sometimes in the process of spatial negotiations, 'defensive reactions become sources of meaning and identity, constructing new cultural codes'.<sup>314</sup> Hence everyday landscapes not only enable negotiation with the dynamic changes of urban societies, but also open new possibilities for restructuring and reconstituting identities.

The above discussion has highlighted how understanding everyday life and its relationship with the built environment can offer valuable insights for design thinking. Central to this is the characteristic nature of urban interactions that define people's everyday spatial practices and behaviour. What is frequently overlooked in design is the study of this 'interaction' as a reciprocal communication between everyday built environment and people. This communication has a complex structure which is dictated by the meanings embedded into the built environment and their successful interpretation. The higher the congruence of embedded meanings and their interpretation, the more successful is its structure of communication,<sup>315</sup> the results of which determine the extent of opportunities the built environment provides for nurturing everyday life and associated spatial practices. This approach of studying the interaction between people and the built environment as 'communication' helps in articulating spatial forms that are receptive to 'everyday life of conflicts, tensions, cracks, and fissures—a shifting ground that continually open to new potentials'.<sup>316</sup> The last hierarchical level of the research context in which this case study is based is the typology of everyday urban spaces which are identified for the case studies. The following section explains the emergence, relevance and significance of this typology of spaces for this research.

#### 5.4 Incidental Urban Spaces

The urban environment consists of different types of places designed and used for various activities. In urban spaces people search for cues and signs which guide them to act in certain ways in those spaces. But in the contemporary designed environment, arguably these signs often tend to be too rigid and dominant, so that they literally dictate people's behaviour. This has led

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<sup>313</sup> Fredrik Barth, "The Analysis of Culture in Complex Societies", *Ethnos*, 54 (1989), 120–142, 132.

<sup>314</sup> Manuel Castells, *The rise of the network society*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 69–70.

<sup>315</sup> Stuart Hall, "Encoding, decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 1993), 90–103, 94.

<sup>316</sup> McLeod, "Henri Lefebvre's Critique of Everyday Life: An Introduction." 20.

urban designers to seek an understanding of other less formal, less controlled urban open spaces, in order to highlight their significance in enabling spontaneous, open and enhanced spatial experiences.

In between the more constrained private and enclosed places of cities (houses, apartments, offices, shops, churches, libraries and so on) lie public spaces, often but not always outdoors, where definitions and expectations are less prescribed and more fluid, where there is greater accessibility and freedom of choice for people to pursue a variety of activities. One of the well-known works that brought to light the significance of ordinary spaces and their associated activities is Jan Gehl's 1971 book on *Life Between Buildings*. Gehl begins by broadly categorising the types of outdoor activities in public spaces which demand different kind of places: necessary activities, optional activities and social activities. The necessary activities —like going to school or work— Gehl explains as those in which people are to a greater or lesser degree required to participate. Gehl states that 'as the activities in this group are necessary, their incidence is influenced only slightly by the physical framework'.<sup>317</sup> He defines social activities as 'all those that depend on the presence of others in public space, and include children at play, greetings and conversations, communal activities of various kinds, and finally—as the most widespread social activity—the passive contacts that are simply seeing and hearing other peoples and optional activities are 'those pursuits that are participated in if there is a wish to do so and if time and place make it possible'<sup>318</sup>. Gehl explains that when the quality of outdoor areas is good, optional activities occur with increasing frequency. Furthermore, as the level of optional activity rises, the number of social activities which he describes as 'resultant' activities usually increases substantially. What is interesting to note here is that the environment supporting optional activities acts as spur for social activity and enables a healthy social interaction between people. Gehl explains that life between buildings offers opportunities for these optional activities, as it supports people to engage with one another 'in a relaxed and undemanding way'.<sup>319</sup> This brings to focus the significance of those urban outdoor spaces which are not strictly 'designed' but which play an important role in social life, and consequently marks out the significance to be gained in understanding how people's behaviour and engagement relates to these particular spaces.

Another work focussing on the importance of similar spaces in cities is Karen Franck and Quentin Steven's *Loose Spaces*, which they define as follows: 'Loose space is a space apart from the aesthetically and behaviourally controlled "themed" environments of leisure and consumption

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<sup>317</sup> Jan Gehl, *Life between buildings : using public space* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid, 19.

where nothing unpredictable must occur'.<sup>320</sup> They state that accessibility, freedom of choice and physical elements that occupants can appropriate all contribute to the emergence of a loose space. They explain that loose spaces are created when people recognise the potential within the space and to the extent with which what is present can be used creatively with determination with the possibilities of modifying existing elements or bringing in additional ones. These possibilities can be understood in the terms that James J Gibson developed, namely the concept of affordances which he describes as follows: 'the affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill'.<sup>321</sup> William W. Gaver explains that 'in the process of perceiving the environment, people actively engage with, and holistically assesses the meaning-laden, value-rich environment and determines what it can do with the features the environment avails. They directly perceive the environment in terms of its potential for action'<sup>322</sup> and these people-relative action possibilities in the environment is what Gibson called affordances. The physical elements of places implicitly play a crucial role for enabling possibilities of action for people, as Gibson explains that walls, fences and ledges, which are often supposed to delimit space and behaviour, can be sat upon, climbed onto and used to display banners or items for sale; their looseness is a product of the affordances which such boundaries provide.<sup>323</sup>

One important characteristic feature of loose space is that it allows people to 'test the limits of what is socially acceptable behaviour'.<sup>324</sup> But it is this transgressive behaviour that 'establishes new standards of acceptability for the use of urban spaces'.<sup>325</sup> Margret Crawford's definition of everyday urban space includes vacant lots, sidewalks, front yards, parks and parking lots that have been appropriated for new and often temporary uses that possess 'multiple and shifting meanings rather than clarity and function'.<sup>326</sup> Chase and Crawford argue that it is these spaces in a city which exhibits some of the key features of urbanity which are access, freedom of choice, density and the intermixing of different kinds of people and activities.<sup>327</sup>

This ability in a space which fosters new meanings is important for this research as it offers favourable conditions of freedom, access and spontaneity within which one's identity can be

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<sup>320</sup> Karen A Franck and Quentin Stevens, *Loose space : possibility and diversity in urban life* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 3.

<sup>321</sup> James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological approach to visual perception* (Hillsdale (N.J.): Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986), 127.

<sup>322</sup> Gaver William W., "Technology Affordances," in *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '91)* (New Orleans, 1991).

<sup>323</sup> Gibson, *The Ecological approach to visual perception*.

<sup>324</sup> Franck and Stevens, *Loose space*, 14.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>326</sup> John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski, eds., *Everyday urbanism* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008).

<sup>327</sup> Franck and Stevens, *Loose space*, 7.

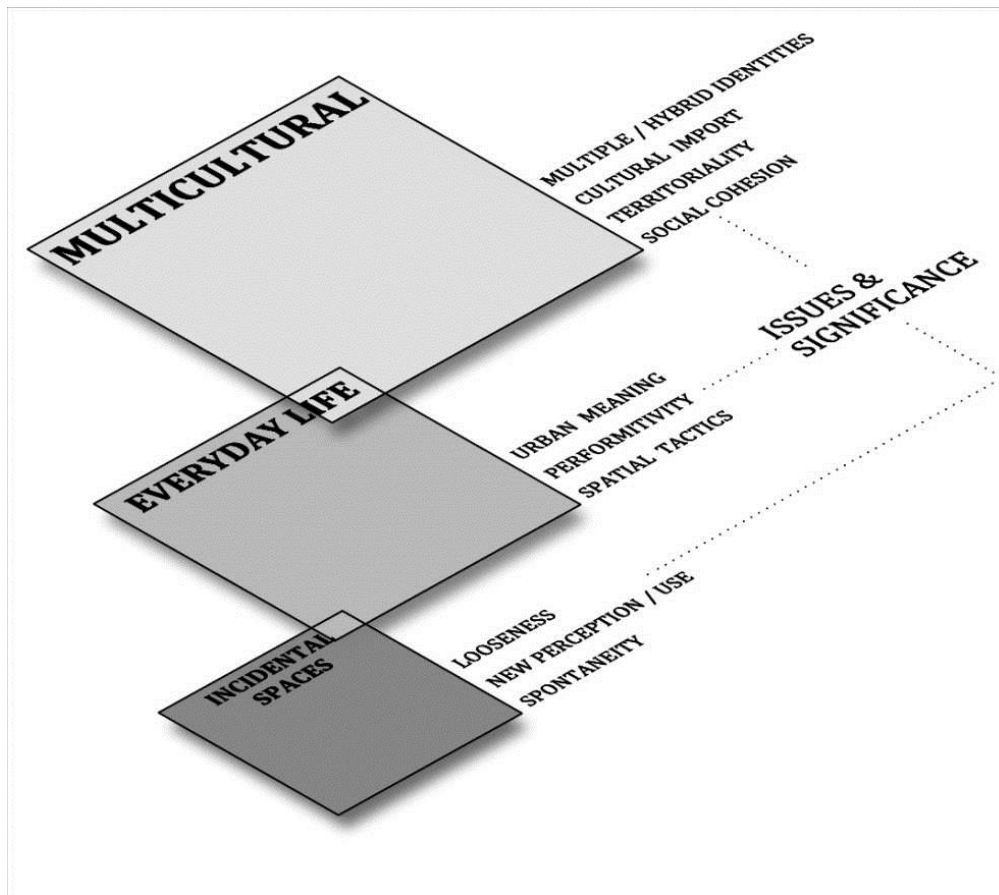
negotiated. For this reason, the type of urban spaces chosen for close examination is referred to as incidental spaces, which are essentially loose spaces with transitional quality. The characteristic nature of incidental spaces are explained more in detail in section 5.7.2. Incidental spaces occur rather unselfconsciously in locations which are often forgotten, as they are transitional spaces or spill over spaces in the everyday urban environment. Incidental spaces enable a deeper understanding of people's behaviour, as they can more readily perform unregulated and sometimes unexpected actions there, and thus loosen up the dominant or existing meanings which characterise the spaces, allowing them to change meanings and in turn give rise to new perceptions, attitudes and behaviour.<sup>328</sup> It is the changed meanings which define the spatial tactics of people in their identity negotiations in the urban environment. As De Certeau notes, these tactics are used to manipulate or divert a given situation as a means of adapting rather than succumbing to conditions on the ground.<sup>329</sup> Here, the condition means the diversity and complexities of identifying oneself with the urban environment. Hence studying incidental spaces can provide valuable insights into understanding the complexity of identity construction in contemporary urban environments.

The illustration below shows the various levels of context in which this research is situated and the related issues and significance at each level.

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>329</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Calif; London: University of California Press, 1988), 29-30.



**Figure 5.1** Various levels in research context. (Source: Drawn by the author)

The previous sections described the characteristic nature of urban spaces, explaining the significance of various levels from the broader context of multicultural environment to the incidental spaces of everyday life (refer Fig 5.1) largely facilitated in the identification of the pilot case studies for this research.

## 5.5 Exploratory studies

### 5.5.1 Need for exploratory studies

Earlier chapters have discussed the growing complexities of urban spatialities and the impact this has on peoples' identity. Various ideas, issues and viewpoints on people and place relationships relevant for this research were discussed. What was missing at this point for this research was the understanding people's perception on these changing place relationships. As this understanding is significant and instrumental towards orienting and refining the research questions, an initial pilot study was conducted to delve into the perceptions and attitudes that urban dwellers have towards the contemporary built environment. It was also interesting and

important to develop a comparative understanding of past and present place experiences, as this can potentially reveal people's expectations, needs and negotiations with the changing place notions. While the first pilot study was aimed to orient and support the research questions, a second pilot study was conducted to identify and refine the case study areas and methods that would be used in the following main case study. The complexity and the multidimensional factors involved in identity studies demand careful selection of methods and cases which can capture the various implicit aspects of people, place and identity relationship which is crucial for addressing the research questions.

## 5.6 Study I: Place memories

Norberg Schulz suggests that people's existence is largely experienced as 'meaningless', as they no longer belong to a meaningful totality.<sup>330</sup> At this juncture, pausing and reflecting on those place memories which rendered meaning both for the *experience* and *experiencer*, will enable us to comprehend the various implicit aspects create indissociable bonds between place and people. Critical study of nostalgic places contains opportunities for greater understanding through detachment as well as attachment to those places.<sup>331</sup>

When philosopher Edward Casey questions how often a memory is either of a place itself or of an event or person *in* a place,<sup>332</sup> he clearly explains the place-bound quality of memories (though the degree to which the place gains significance in a particular memory may vary with individuals). One of the logical reasons for this, explained in section 1.4, which is worth reiterating is the fact that the physical cognitive structures are subtle, and because of this they are also more complex than the social and personal cognitive structures and tend to be remote from the awareness of the individual, because physical settings are "backdrops" against which events occur.<sup>333</sup> In his book *Remembering*, Casey cites two main reasons for overlooking the importance of place in memory, the first being the supremacy bestowed over time and second, the increasing tendency of reducing place to 'site' determined by metric dimensions.<sup>334</sup> Though we have to accept for various reasons the differing priority of 'place' in nostalgic thoughts per se, the fact remains that place itself is a keeper of memories, one of the many ways by which the past comes to be secured

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<sup>330</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture : Meaning and Place : Selected Essays*, 12.

<sup>331</sup> Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary Of Meaning*, 49.

<sup>332</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering : a phenomenological study*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 89.

<sup>333</sup> Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff, "Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self," in *Readings in Environmental Psychology : Giving Places Meaning*, ed. Linda Groat (London: Academic Press, 1995), 87–113.

<sup>334</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering*, 112.

in the present.<sup>335</sup> Fleeting yet significant self-experiences are especially captured in nostalgic places, which otherwise are blurred as they are caught amidst various complexities of our living. Place memories are potentially significant in offering valuable insights for the study of aspects of people's self-identity, as they possess a profound intimacy with *self*, rich with lived experiences of everyday lives.

A significant term in the understanding of self-identity through nostalgic places is 'place-identity'. Proshansky et al. define place identity as a substructure of the self-identity of the person, consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of behaviour and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical setting that define the day-to-day existence of every human being.<sup>336</sup> They further state that the core of such physical environmental-related cognitions is the 'environmental-past' of the person which includes the various places, spaces and their properties which had satisfied all needs. This theoretical definition becomes particularly important to this study as it immediately establishes a profound relationship between nostalgic places and the rich intimate experiential aspects of individuals with those places. Another important characteristic of nostalgic places which is imperative for comprehending notions of self-identity is the placidity they exhibit, as described by Bachelard: 'memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are'.<sup>337</sup> The 'soundness' mentioned here invariably suggests the rich intimate experiences of the individual associated with a particular place memory.

According to Proshansky et al. these perceptions and conceptions can be categorised into two clusters, one type consists of memories, thoughts, values and settings, and the other type consists of the relationship among different settings (home, school, and neighbourhood).<sup>338</sup> A comparative study of place memories and lived experiences of everyday lives in the city today is potentially significant in understanding the role of places in transforming 'activities' into meaningful experiences, consciously and unconsciously re-establishing the significant power of place. Understanding urban nostalgia will offer significant insights into the implicit yet deeply-rooted desire of people to feel 'connected'. Overall, even if nostalgia is itself considered as a passive emotion, it is still one that can lead us towards an active responsibility both for the past and the

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<sup>335</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world*, 2nd Revised edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). page!!!

<sup>336</sup> Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff, "Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self."

<sup>337</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>338</sup> Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff, "Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self."



future,<sup>339</sup> in the process of reflecting and understanding this passive emotion facilitates in studying the spatial negotiations and adaptations in the contemporary urban living.

### *5.6.1 Methodology for Study I*

Nostalgic references are used in various fields of study such as marketing communications and products, psychology, social sciences, mass media and many more, where they mainly aim to better understand human beings. The earlier discussions in this chapter clearly endorsed the primacy of place in nostalgic thoughts; it becomes far more applicable in fields of study concerned with the built environment to understand the relationship between people and places through nostalgic places.

An exploratory study with 8 participants involving people from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds was carried out to understand the perceptions and attitudes of people towards nostalgic places. The age group of the participants was in the range of 22–50. The study involved in-depth structured interviews carried out in two stages. The study mainly aimed to address the following two key questions:

- What are the significant comparisons between contemporary place experiences of everyday living and ‘ideal’ past place experiences, and how can they provide valuable insights into the underlying implicit concepts or missing links between people-place-identity.
- What are the possible spatial manifestations of the adaptable capacity of human beings for identity negotiations?

The first stage of the interview attempted to understand the nostalgic place which the participants had considered for this study. Baker and Kennedy suggest that there are three levels of nostalgic associations based on levels of emotional intensity which is experienced with each: *real nostalgia*—symbolic of time with direct experience; *simulated nostalgia*—symbolic of time with no direct experience; and *collective nostalgia*—symbolic of culture, nature and generation.<sup>340</sup> The types of place memories considered for this study were real nostalgic associations, which are

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<sup>339</sup> Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary Of Meaning*, 45.

<sup>340</sup> Stacey Menzel Baker and Patricia F. Kennedy, “Death by Nostalgia: A Diagnosis of Context-Specific Cases,” in *Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Chris T. Allen and Deborah Roedder John, vol. 21 (Provo: UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1994), 169–74.

referred to by Davis as 'true nostalgia'<sup>341</sup> and which can only be experienced if a person has lived through the event.

The second stage explicated the lived experiences of contemporary living. The two stages were aimed to gradually take the respondent's thoughts and observations from the tangible aspects of the place memory to the intangible and emotional content of that place memory. Data collected were analysed to make significant observations on the longings, expectations, negotiations and frustrations of people towards their environment, thereby allowing fuller understanding of the underlying concept of how people 'connect' with places today. The study also helped in understanding the relationship between people, 'self' and place, amidst the rapid pace of modern living.

Stage I: This first stage of interviewing focused on comprehending tangible and intangible factors of place memories which enhance the intimacy between people and place. The main task given to respondents was to identify any physical setting close to their heart which no longer existed or that had been changed beyond recognition due to various reasons; further questioning was based upon this same setting. The choice of the physical settings was not restricted to home, but places of transitional quality were not encouraged due to the fleeting nature of experience associated with them compared to the more permanent quality of experience offered by other places. On identification of their own place of longing, respondents were asked to provide a detailed description of their chosen place; a visual image of the chosen place was requested if it was possible, which could be supplemented with sketches. The participant's description of their chosen place included the various aspects of physical settings of the place, quality of experiences, reciprocities of relationship between the respondent and their chosen place memory. The study deliberately aimed at spending a considerable amount of time on description of places to gradually and unconsciously make the respondents get closer to their place memories. At this juncture the respondents were asked about their intentions of recreating their lost place if given a choice. Respondents who were willing to recreate were asked first about the reasons for their willingness, and later to explain more fully the methods by which they proposed to recreate the lost place, and also the reasons for choosing that particular method. These included: Verbal (such as narrative, poetry, etc.); Visual (such as painting, scrapbooks); and Virtual (such as simulation, digital representation) which were the choices suggested in the study instructions given to the participants.

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<sup>341</sup> Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (Free Press, 1979).

Out of 8 participants, 3 responded indicating their willingness to recreate their chosen place, while the remaining 5 participants were not willing to recreate it. The group of respondents who were not willing to recreate their place memory were asked about the reasons for their decision, and further questions were posed on the means which they would adapt to overcome the longing for their lost places.

Stage II: The second stage of the interview involved enquires regarding the lived experiences of day-to-day lives of urban city dwellers to understand the engagement of people in places and how they relate themselves with their built environment. Respondents were asked to identify a specific task which was the most satisfying part of their everyday routine. To aid the comparison of their experiences in nostalgic places and the contemporary built environment in the data analysis stage, similar rules (avoiding the selection of transitional places) and activities were enforced. On identifying the activity respondents were asked to provide a detailed description of the physical settings in which the chosen activity takes place, highlighting more those aspects of the place which the respondent considered to be significant for making the activity 'fit' in that place. It was requested that these descriptions be supported by multiple images which are presented in the following section. Additional enquiries were made on the nature of the task with a detailed narration of the activity in relation to daily routine.

The main aim of the data collection in both stages was to extract maximum information from the respondents (both visual and written data) which would facilitate the analysis of the explicit and implicit aspects of place which encourage or discourage the meaningful engagement with those places.

### ***5.6.2 Analysis and Discussion***

As the study mainly involved delving into the implicit meanings of people and place relationships in the past and present, careful interpretation of the narrative and visual data formed the crux of the analysis.

The inferences from two stages of the study were used to address the following key issues:

- What is the relationship between the 'lost' and the 'found' relationship between people and place?
- How does the concept of 'self' get accommodated in the everyday living?
- What are the changing perceptions of, and attitudes towards, urban nostalgia?

The following key observations emerged from the data analysis and interpretation:

### **Place memories and recreation:**

One of the participant describes the spacious terrace which he has many childhood memories attached to:

*The terrace was able to accommodate various types of activities. I especially remember the parapet wall of the terrace which served as a track for my toy car, as runway for my aeroplane, I held them and guided these toys over it and would mimic sounds imagining that were on the run and it was almost like a daily ritual for me. After dinner we would sit in the terrace and gaze at the stars and my father would tell folk stories about them... And recreating such a place is equivalent to erasing out those memories.*

The physical settings of the place and its ability to accommodate activities (like the parapet wall and star gazing) has been central in the account of the participant. The respondent's unwillingness to recreate place at a personal level involving rich and intimate experiences, identifying completely with the place: this confirms what Susan Stewart explains when she states that 'nostalgia is the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all repetitions and denies the repetition's capacity to define identity'.<sup>342</sup> One of the participant affirms this as follows:

*Recreation [of lost places] is not possible because of the changing world around and it's better to see the original in our minds than a compromised version in recreation*

One of the participants explains her current home which had given her memorable experiences and have constantly failed in the process of finding a similar place recently to move into,

*The place I like the house that I am currently staying in Hyderabad in the area of Lakdikapool. As my father got retired, we are supposed to leave this quarters and shift to some other place. My house being a flat in a 7th storey building has huge open area surrounded by many huge lovely trees. With a lovely and spacious playground for kids, and other folks to walk and sit in a peaceful and calm environment. The thing that amaze the most is the fact that my quarters in situated in the centre of the city and once you go out of the gate, you can find a heavily crowded traffic and noisy road. I have had some memorable moments with this house as all my important phases of life, for example my college days and in fact my professional life, my dad's retirement, my sisters childhood till her professional life has happened in this very house and locality. I love to see the sunrise and sunset from our balcony with full of plants that we grow in our balcony. I love to sit in the hang out area of our quarters surrounded by huge trees and kids playing. I love to see the first rain, smell of soil, birds surrounding the trees building their nests, my mom having a tough time to accommodate a nest for pigeons in my balcony, we having special moments like a baby pigeon birth each and every moment. I have been searching from couple of months to find a similar place for us in the city to shift, but could not find a place which is even having a slight replication to the current house of mine*

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<sup>342</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of nostalgia*, XVIII.

Questions pertaining to the recreation of the physical settings of memorable places through various Verbal, Visual and Virtual methods set out above revealed two distinct stances from respondents. When the place of longing involved places at personal level (study room, bedroom, terrace), the respondents were not willing to recreate these, but when the choice of place was at a neighbourhood or social level (parks, cafeteria, shops) they were willing to recreate the settings. While at personal level respondent used words like 'futile', 'impossible' and 'devalue' to explain their reluctance to recreate, at a neighbourhood level they were keen on 'restoring the pride', 'passing the beauty over to next generation', 'sharing the authenticity of experiences' and felt 'responsible to revive the past'. With the willingness to 'recreate' places at a social level, there seems to be an overall solidarity exhibited in understanding the value of genuine self-experiences with the places and the human finitude in re-establishing or reliving those experiences.

**Sensory engagement:** Most of the respondents were able to narrate their place memories which involved visual, acoustic, tactile, and olfactory experiences. One of the participants explained how even if there was a lack of space in her reading room, the room fitted her favourite task of reading on an everyday basis with the presence of papers and books which she can see visually and also through the smell of the old book (see Figs 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4). She states,

*It's a small room, it is almost filled with books, magazines, papers and bounded notes, everywhere from floors, racks, cardboard boxes etc, but the very scene of this and the smell of my books connects me to the world of reading.*



**Figure 5.3** view of reading room



**Figure 5.2** book shelves in the reading room

Another participant explains her favourite place as a stable within a rundown building which was the home for her horse Saika for 7 years. She describes the stable as follows,

*The stable wasn't purpose built but adapted from a farm building....I remember the building had a definite smell. A combination of horses and sweet hay. There was a hint of ammonia and horse dropping. My horses nuzzle also had a distinct smell which was also due to this building and I could identify my horse in the field on a dark night by smelling their noses.*

It can be noticed how the sensory engagement with place have strong impact and in this case has been the central part of the describing a place itself.

**Reflection of Self-identity:** In all the detailed personal narrations of place memories, the concept of 'self' loomed as a significant factor in creating intimacy between the respondents and the place. Further the same participant talking about her reading room also explained how the room is a part of her as it has memories attached to it and her attachments with the space. The extent to which one can develop a sense of self by performing a task which accommodates ones' 'needs' is well explained in her account of her relationship with the room given below:

*People who see me sitting in a corner and reading , comment that in such a room how a person concentrate and read? But, when I go to my room and start reading, I feel like I get into a world which is, exclusive for me and read with full concentration. It may look like an old messy room to others but to me, it's the most comfortable place in the whole world. It also carries enormous memories of the happy time spent there. And when I was abroad for my education, I understood and realised that, I start missing my room more than the books and reading. Because, there too I filled my university hall room, with as many books as possible and even sat on the floor to read , of course it gave me a feeling of comfort , relaxation and ease, but not the satisfaction; The mails I wrote home always ended with a request to my mother urging her not to try changing anything in my room; And I remember running to my room and sitting in the corner as soon as I returned home from abroad, it gave me the 'I am back home' feeling. And the books I brought and read there seemed more interesting to me when I read it in my room. The connect and attachment towards the books were, tremendously more. I think it's an emotional connect and a sentimental attachment which I have towards the room, that enhances my reading experiences. As a whole, more than a room its became a part of me and I really get furious when the setting or arrangement in my room are changes.*

The above narratives gives a glimpse of how the physical setting slowly has developed an intimate relationship with the participant that it makes most of the places not satisfactory enough for the favourite activity of reading to be performed. It is particularly interesting how the place has created a bond with the participant. Becoming a part of her, the room is an external spatial manifestations of her 'inner world' which makes the participant agitated when there is an intrusion from outside in terms of altering the arrangement or even cleaning the room. This account is particularly important in indicating the extent to which a person gets connected to a

place and exhibits a more intimate sense of home in such place as in this case the participants feeling 'being home' after she comes to her room. (see Fig 5.4)



**Figure 5.4 Another view of the room showing the bookshelf**

Respondents were quite often 'able to relate' themselves in the physical settings in their place memories. Notions of self rarely appeared in the narratives of everyday lives. When the inner self of an individual identifies with space it is instinctively accepted as creative,<sup>343</sup> encouraging recurrent quality transaction of experiences with the place. This creative quality is inherent in the nostalgic places which foster an unselfconscious experience of deep relationship with the place which Martin-Buber states as 'I-Thou',<sup>344</sup> a state of harmonious union between person and place. In modern society attention has almost exclusively been concentrated on the "practical" function of orientation, whereas identification has been left to chance.<sup>345</sup>

Descriptions of present day experiences largely revolved around psychological escapism to alleviate the mundane routine. Emplacing oneself through bodily engagement emerged as a vital

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<sup>343</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of space*, 10.

<sup>344</sup> Cited in Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 65.

<sup>345</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci : Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), 22.

reason which leads to the rich sensory experiences of nostalgic places, creating positive engagement with places. One of the inherent qualities of place memories was how they were able to 'accommodate' the respondent: 'as water fills up a vessel into which it is poured and is protected by the vessel, so the lived body can fit snugly into a particular place and be protected by it'.<sup>346</sup> In contrast, many present day settings allow self-displacement, making the relationship between people and place increasingly fragile.

**Appropriate pace and space for engagement:** Phases within the day which slowed down the pace of the everyday activity was indicated as a favourite part of that day. Explaining the time she spends with her son, the participant described,

*I spend an hour with my 3.5 year old son in the mornings doing puzzles, reading or talking. The early hour (around 6.30 a.m.) makes sure we have a peaceful time when the rest of the house is still sleep and the busy time has not started yet. And I get to understand his thought process much better because of the relaxed frame of mind.*

Apart from the slow pace which was making the task effective, the place itself was indicated to enriching the overall experience of the time spent with her son.

*The backyard of the house is where we sit in the mornings. There is a small cuddapah (black stone) platform that he uses to out his play things on. There is the backyard garden and a tulsi maadam (sacred plant) which makes the overall experience more peaceful. I especially like the steps leading to the garden o which both love to sit, watch and play with leaves, flowers, paints and whatever else that catches his fancy. (see Fig 5.5)*

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<sup>346</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 132.





**Figure 5.5 View of the child drawing activity on cuddapah stone platform**

Similar notions on activities which give a sense of pause was explained by one participant as,

*The most satisfying activity of my daily routine is to watch and to chat with the kids playing in my quarters sit out area. Watching them to play and chatting with them is a great stress buster for me. I sit in our quarters sit out area every evening after coming from my office and watch them play in the open area that we have in our quarters. I don't think about anything when I watch them and talk with them. It kind of pauses my otherwise busy life. The sit out area is completely surrounded by trees and the place is very much secured and the ambience is completely suitable for kids to play and for elders and adults to cherish the nature. This is a perfect locality for kids to play. (see Fig 5.6)*



**Figure 5.6 Outdoor play space for the children**

Respondents were particularly keen on using words like 'still', 'watch', 'forget', 'pause' when describing the activities that were satisfying, which reflects how urban dwellers are increasingly suffering from perpetual time pressure or chronophobia.

Another participant explained how he had his morning coffee meetings at the health club, which offered a perfect setting for spontaneous interaction and conversations, and provides the most satisfying experiences in his everyday life.

*A couple of friends and I meet each Friday mornings at our local health and fitness club for coffee and conversation. This is an activity which I particularly satisfying as we exchange views which is mind broadening and intellectually challenging. There is no plan or agenda imposed on this activity. The physical setting make it an overall pleasant and comfortable experience with sofas arranged around low tables , the back ground noise also reduce the idea of being conscious of not disturbing others. informal conversation fits so well into this setting allowing spontaneity in our engagement.*

The study examined the significance of links between the 'lost' and the 'found' as it is indispensable to understand what we are (now) in terms of what we were (then),<sup>347</sup> and most importantly reinforced some of the concepts on place and identity relationships discussed in section 1.4, as participants showed the emergence of identity concepts linked to meaningful place experiences (in this case referring to nostalgic places). The study also indicated how people and place relationships can be potentially negotiated through spatial tactics for instance bodily engagement, stressing on optional activities which gives a sense of slowness and meaning<sup>348</sup> play an important role in dealing with the dynamics and complexities of urban living today.

One of the participants explains how a space which is largely occupied with the dining table accommodated several aspects of her needs as a working mother,

*I consider the time which I spend with my children in the dinning space the most satisfying activity of my everyday routine because as a working mother I suffer severe separation anxiety when I am away for work, which I compensate by spending the maximum time with them on reaching home. As my children are young, they demand constant attention, at play or work. This space is central to my everyday life as it is positioned in such a way, it enables household activities ( mainly cooking) and monitoring to go hand in hand. In this current urban scenario, where break-ins and crimes are often, this niche permits to oversee the passers by outside, unknown to them. Despite the small size of the space, the circulation space between the main entrance door and the kitchen door creates a defined triangular zone which is invisibly impermeable. This strengthens me to communicate more effectively, giving nurturing guidance without compromising on my household duties, which is facilitated in a better manner by this space.(see Fig 5.7)*

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<sup>347</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of nostalgia*, XVIII.

<sup>348</sup> Gehl, *Life between buildings*.



**Figure 5.7 dinning space and other associated activities**

The participants' narratives on their favourite tasks provided an insight into how the characteristic nature of the place—whether it is the health club, or outdoor space or inside of a room— plays a central role, explicitly or implicitly, in not only offering a favourable setting but also enriching the overall experiences of the participants. This indicates that deeper study of contemporary place experiences have the potential to comprehend the changing identity notions, as place and identity remain implicitly connected. The study indicates some of the factors of bodily experiences, temporality, everyday life, and nostalgic experiences as some of the most important aspects in understanding identity which are crucial for this research, as it is often likely that these aspects are overlooked or given less importance when delving into spatial

complexities. Though the study had been significant in understanding the reflections and negotiations of identity through place memories, at every point this study indicated the need to acknowledge that the power of place exceeds what recollection, as well as other forms of remembering, can effectively encompass.<sup>349</sup>

## 5.7 Study II: Spatial behaviour and identity

Recently psychologists have compiled an impressive body of research that shows how deeply our decisions and behaviour are influenced by unconscious thought, and how greatly those thoughts are swayed by stimuli beyond our immediate comprehension. In one such work, Ruud Custers and Henk Aarts explain the significance of the unconscious will emphasising its role in influencing peoples' behaviour.<sup>350</sup> They state that 'people often act in order to realize desired outcomes, and they assume that consciousness drives that behaviour. But the field now challenges the idea that there is only a conscious will. Our actions are very often initiated even though we are unaware of what we are seeking or why'.<sup>351</sup>

In this context it becomes relevant to study people's unconscious spatial activities and experiences in places that allow them to construct or negotiate identity, initiating place engagement, leading towards lived experiences that go unnoticed. Lived experiences in everyday life possess deep-rooted meanings which are often implicit, but when explored carefully may reveal interesting concepts towards place engagement in modern cities. Lived experiences of daily lives occurring unconsciously in 'nameless' and 'insignificant' places that are often neglected due to their transitional quality can offer interesting clues on the spatial behaviour of people. The second pilot study aimed to capture the unconscious spatial practices that reflect those notions of identity that could provide insights into the identity manifestations and spatial practices in the contemporary urban context.

### 5.7.1 Case study identification

The characteristic nature of spaces chosen for the second pilot study needed to be defined carefully, as they play a central role in enabling the unconscious spatial behaviours of people. The kind of urban spaces that were considered for this study possessed the two important aspects: Transitional quality and Looseness, which were introduced in section 4.4.

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<sup>349</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering*, 214.

<sup>350</sup> Ruud Custers and Henk Aarts, "The Unconscious Will: How the Pursuit of Goals Operates Outside of Conscious Awareness," *Science* 329, no. 5987 (July 2, 2010): 47–50, doi:10.1126/science.1188595.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

- *Transitional quality*

William Bridges, in his book *Transitions*, explains the notion of transition as a neutral zone that one experiences moving between the ending of a previous state and the beginning of a new state.<sup>352</sup> Mike Green and Esther Cameron highlight the potential of the transition mode as that state of mind which can be strange and confusing but also one with great potential and latent creativity<sup>353</sup> offers interesting domain for studying spatial tactics for identity negotiations. Transition spaces can be considered as a unique and potentially creative domain where people unconsciously tend to be experimental, innovative and enthusiastic. The notion of inbetweenness of transitional spaces offers both rich and complex spatial experiences as it embraces spaces that are between ‘The Inner and the Outer; The Subjective and the Objective; Reflection and Action; Stimulus and Response; or betwixt and between’.<sup>354</sup> Transitional spaces, offering interesting experiential and behavioural opportunities, qualify to provide a rich and appropriate domain for exploring people’s creative spatial practices enabling identity negotiations and manifestations.

- *Looseness of spaces*

Loose spaces are those public space that do not have any fixed use and allow ‘people to recognise the possibilities inherent and make use of those possibilities for their own ends, facing the potential risks of doing so’.<sup>355</sup> Apart from allowing more spontaneous and unconscious spatial behaviour of people another important aspect of loose spaces is their potential to generate different kinds of activities and place appropriation that is enabled by ‘accessibility, freedom of choice and the physical elements’<sup>356</sup> of the space itself. Most of these activities Karen Frank and Frank Steven state are ‘neither productive nor reproductive, being instead a matter of leisure, entertainment, self-expression or political expression, reflection and social interaction—all outside the daily routine and the world of fixed functions and fixed schedule’.<sup>357</sup> The characteristic nature of these activities mentioned unconsciously encourages more meaningful engagement

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<sup>352</sup> William Bridges, *Transitions: making sense of life's changes* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004).

<sup>353</sup> Esther Cameron and Mike Green, *Making sense of change management a complete guide to the models, tools, and techniques of organizational change* (London; Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2012).

<sup>354</sup> Mike Green, “So What Exactly Is Transitional Space?,” *Transitional Space “Enabling Change”*, January 2012, <http://changets.wordpress.com/2012/01/23/so-what-exactly-is-transitional-space/>.

<sup>355</sup> Karen A Franck and Quentin Stevens, “Tying Down Loose Space,” in *Loose space: possibility and diversity in urban life*, ed. Karen A Franck and Quentin Stevens (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 1–33, 2.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

with the environment allowing a sense of identity to emerge implicitly.

### **5.7.2 Incidental spaces**

The typology of spaces chosen for this study incorporates both the looseness and transition as their characteristic quality, and I refer to these kinds of spaces as 'Incidental spaces' in this research. The term incidental is used to capture the notion of unplanned and the spontaneous nature of experiences enabled by such spaces. For this pilot study, incidental spaces of differing scales were chosen, which facilitate a deeper understanding of unconscious behavioural aspects of people at both social and individual levels. Sheffield, with its thriving international student community comprising diverse cultural backgrounds, offers a favourable platform for exploring the issues of place relationships and identity in a holistic way, complimenting the overarching goal of this study. The incidental spaces chosen included Sheffield University Tram stop and informal interaction spaces in front of the Information Commons building of Sheffield University (see Fig 5.8), which provided rich opportunity for interaction and engagement with the environment for varying groups of people (with respect to age, profession, gender and cultural background).



**Figure 5.8 Map showing the location of the case study areas of Information Commons building and tram stop , Sheffield. (Source: Google map)**

### ***5.7.3 Methodology of study II***

A participant observation technique was selected as this can be unobtrusive and effective in capturing unconscious spatial behavioural and patterns of people being observed. With a range of informal interactions, encounters, activities and participants involved in study, extensive photographing was employed to supplement written records of the data at various hours of the observation. As the study mainly involved examining the implicit meanings of people and space relationships and experiences, careful interpretation of the visual data formed the crux of the study. Careful observation of participants in the tram stop and interaction spaces was carried out on weekdays from 10.00 AM till 5.00 PM for one week (in September 2012) in each of the spaces. The data was recorded through field notes, activity maps and photographs.

### ***5.7.4 Analysis and discussion***

Based on observation of activity and movement patterns, it became apparent that the settings could be divided into various zones. Extensive photographing was employed to capture aspects such as those of different age group interactions, activities and body emplacement/ postures

throughout the observation period. The following key observations emerged from the initial data analysis and interpretation.

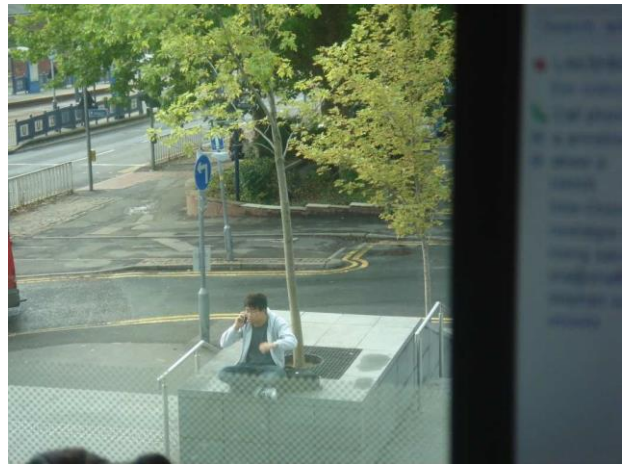
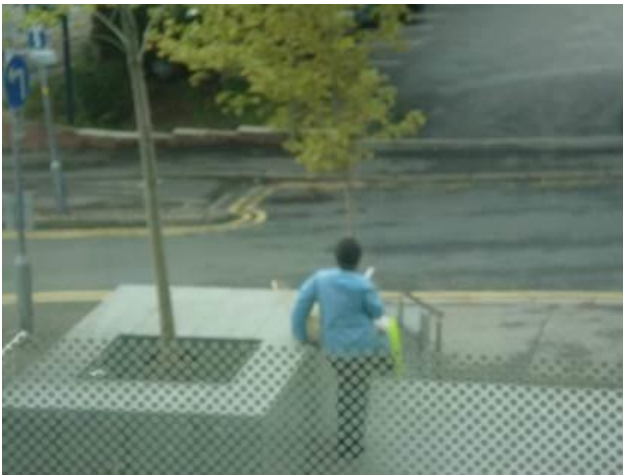
In the tram station, there were specific areas which were frequently occupied by people depending on the activity they were involved in while waiting for the tram. These activities varied from talking on mobile phones, waiting with luggage, waiting in groups, general interaction and so on. Further, in the station, individuals tended to occupy places that offered them the flexibility of many bodily postures while people in groups of two and three occupied spaces which were comfortable for interaction until they boarded the tram.

In the informal interaction places, there was a consistency in the choice of activity performed at specific places by individuals (waiting, eating, smoking, reading,) and groups (informal interaction, waiting, eating). There were variations of bodily postures when a person was alone rather than in group. The observation shows that the participants were exhibiting an enhanced usage of bodily postures in occupying the spaces when they were alone compared to when in group interactions (see Fig 5.8). When experiencing spaces alone, participants tended to unconsciously explore the flexibility of the spaces in accommodating their choices which gradually developed into what could be termed as their 'preferred' zone of occupation. There was an unconscious negotiation with the spaces through these bodily postures by which people could be seen to establish a sense of ownership, comfort and territoriality. The observation leads to the emergence of an underlying concept through which people initiate their relationship with these incidental spaces.





**Figure 5.9 Sheffield tram station images showing people's spatial behaviour and place-appropriation**



**Figure 5.10 Place appropriation on platform outside Information Commons**

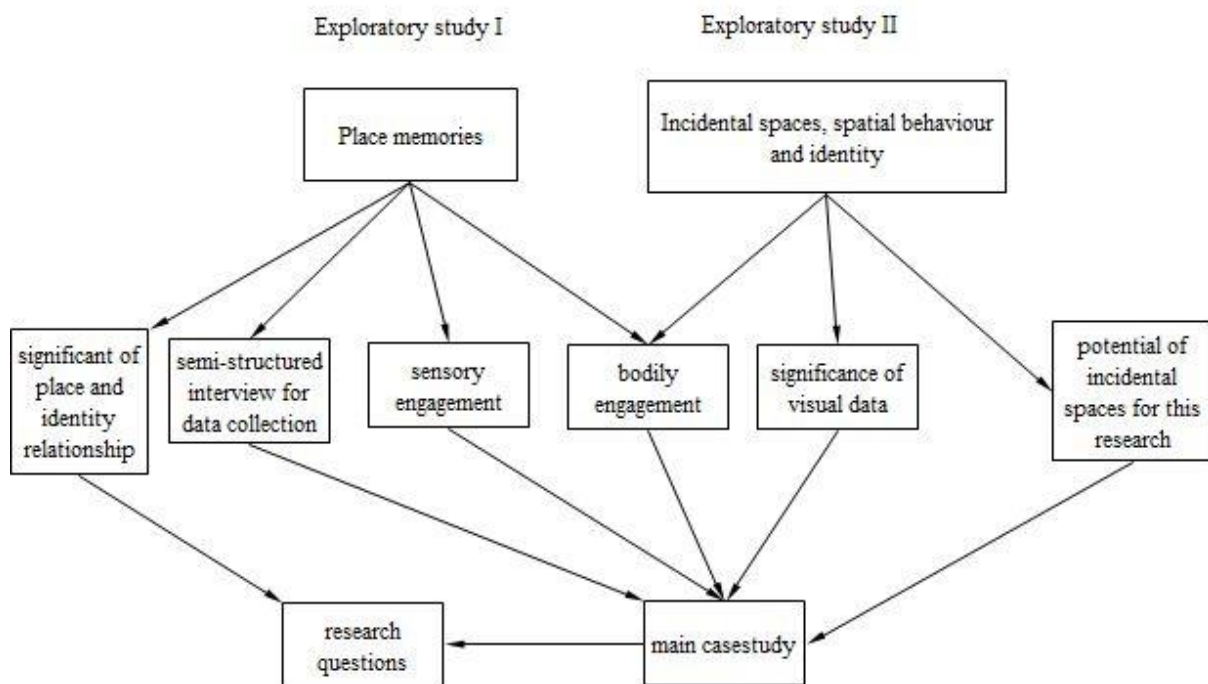


**Figure 5.11 Place appropriation in the seating areas outside Information Commons**

The postural freedom often is possible mainly from the architectural elements that support the choices though it is not a deliberate design decision in most of the cases, as one can comprehend from the various sitting/standing postures of people in the interaction spaces in front of the Information Commons Building (see Figs 5.10 & 5.11). In the above set of images, the physical dimensions of elements on the platform offer opportunities for people to appropriate the space in diverse ways. The raised platform with planters simultaneously offers spaces which can accommodate sitting, standing, waiting . Additionally the railing and the step alongside the platform also enhance the opportunities for such place appropriation as we can see in Fig 5.10. Such spaces, by providing the sense of flexibility, become occupied by

individuals and groups, accommodating choices of 'self' comfort in terms of bodily engagement during the short periods of stay. Casey explains that understanding peoples' place experience in the light of lived human body opens up new vistas on place itself, and argues that body can be seen as a potential tool for emplacing people and serves as a means to reveal the power of place itself. In this case the various ways in which the users explore the space for postural freedom can be understood as one of the ways to engage with the place. Bodily engagement with the immediate space allows people to interact and connect with the environment and thereby initiates the process of identifying oneself with the place.

The physical settings of our everyday living seem to discard the powers of body in emplacing us, so that we realize what being in place can mean for our mundane routine, and how this can take place even in these modest, informal, incidental spaces. The study facilitated a deeper understanding of various factors inherent in the lived experiences of contemporary living. The two exploratory studies served as an excellent platform to explore complexity of spatial experiences before embarking into the main case study, providing valuable insights on the various aspects of spatial behaviour that need to be focussed on during the analysis of the main case studies (see Fig 5.12 ).



**Figure 5.12 Contribution of exploratory studies to the research.** (Source: Drawn by the author)

The first study mainly contributed as a supporting case for the research questions, reinforcing the various layers of relationship between place and identity (for instance memories, sensory engagement, functionality, tasks performed within the space etc.) While the first study indicated the important role of bodily experiences in place relationships, the outcome of the second study reinforced the importance of considering body emplacement in everyday lived experience in the process of spatial negotiation of identity. The second study was particularly useful in testing the potential of incidental space typology to be studied for the main case studies and the various implicit factors that need to be focussed in understanding the incidental spaces. The study also facilitated in testing some of the methods of data collection like photographs, participant observation and interview techniques. The semi-structured interview technique employed in the first study was identified as an effective method to be employed in the main case study, as in it participants are allowed to slowly open up more interconnecting issues to address the research question. The exploratory studies overall contributed in informing the research and also guided immensely to the next stage of main case study.

## Chapter 6

## Main Case Study

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the main case study of this research. The physical context of Sheffield and the various incidental spaces which was identified as a potential source for the main case study in the previous chapter are discussed. The chapter further presents in details the data collection methods and interdisciplinary analysis of the main case study. The various themes that emerged from the analysis were multifarious and complex, and are discussed in detail based on their socio-cultural spatial relevance.<sup>358</sup> Subsequently, emerging themes were compared and analysed for their relationship with the identity motives, and lastly the various levels of place involvement were studied. The inferences from the main case study discussed are synthesized and developed into socio-spatial proposition for identity constructions in the following chapter. This chapter is also significant as it delineates the interdisciplinary framework of analysis which is developed as one of the key contributions of this research in Chapter 7. Hence this chapter forms the basis of both the theoretical and methodological contribution of this thesis.

### 6.2 Main Case study: *Aims and Objectives*

The main case study aimed to understand the complex phenomenon of identity constructions through everyday urban spatial experiences in Sheffield, identified as appropriate and rich case study for this research. The research participants included 15 international students studying at the University of Sheffield UK.

The study aimed to understand how international students' spatial experiences are related to identity construction/negotiation, in order to offer valuable insights into the notions of identity negotiations in multicultural urban spaces. As different cultural groups have different perceptions, their spatial practices also differ and it is important to understand how these diversities are accommodated and/or adapted through myriad possibilities in physical settings. The main case study follows the main research question and four objectives stated in the research statement. At this stage of the research, the fourth objectives is further refined as the

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<sup>358</sup> Various themes from the analysis have been developed into a Journal paper and a Book chapter (in press): Lakshmi Priya Rajendran, Stephen Walker, and Rosie Parnell, "The Dialectic of Place and Passage of Time in Urban Living: A Case Study of International Students' Place Experiences in Sheffield," *Kaleidoscope* 5, no. 2 (Nov, 2013): 132-45 and Lakshmi P Rajendran, Stephen Walker, and Rosie Parnell, "Four Themes to (Phenomenologically) Understand Contemporary Urban Spaces," in *Experience Design :Concepts and Case Studies*, ed. Benz Benz (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, Dec 2014), 81-107,

interdisciplinary concepts used in the research from social psychology and human geography are identified .hence the objectives are more refined which are as follows:

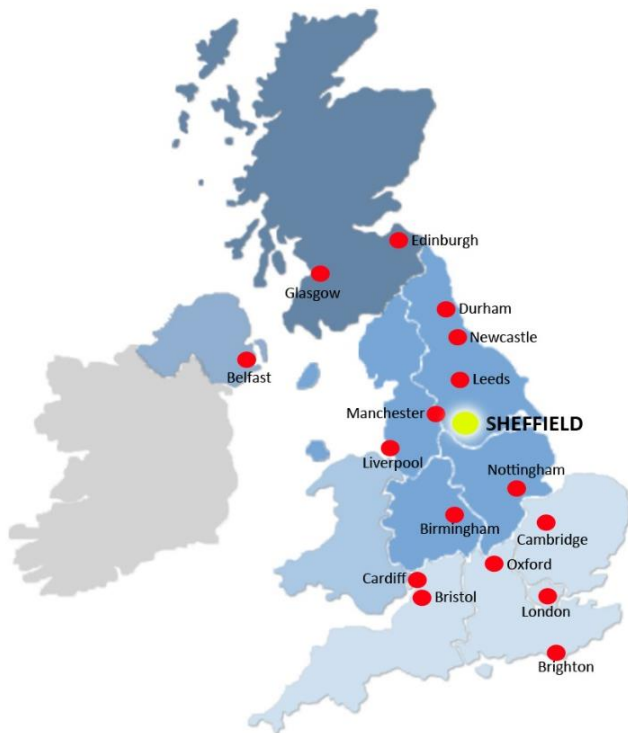
- To comprehend the concept of identity in the light of contemporary spatial practices of international students in Sheffield.
- To identify the implications of socio-spatial aspects of people and place experiences for identity construction and negotiation in multicultural urban environments.
- To examine the relative significance of socio-cultural and spatial factors in identity construction.
- To explore the relationship between the notions of identity motives and socio-spatial practices of international students.
- To understand the relationship between different modes of place experience and identity construction.

### ***6.2.1 Context : Sheffield- The Multicultural City***

The largest ethnic group in Sheffield is what the 2011 census classified as White British—white people of British ancestry, who make up about 81% of the city's population, an 8% drop from 2001. The remaining percentage of city's population includes a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. Between the 1991 and 2001 census the minority ethnic population in Sheffield grew by more than 80%.The other ethnic groups present in Sheffield includes the South Asian, Somalis, Black Caribbean, Spanish, Arabs, Chinese, East European, Nigerians. Sheffield is one of the UK's major cities that is part of the Gateway Protection Programme that has seen around 120 people from Liberia and Burma settle in the city. With such rich and diverse ethnic population of Sheffield, the city presents itself as a favourable destination for international student community.

Nearly 18% of students at universities and higher education institutions in the UK are from outside the UK. Each year, around 480,000 international students come to the UK for their higher education, joining nearly 2 million local students. Sheffield is home to over half a million people, including more than 60,000 students. It's situated centrally in the UK, bordering the beautiful Peak District National Park. Its rich, diverse, multicultural nature of the city that has rightly earned its reputation for being one of the friendliest and safest major cities in the UK. In 2013, the University of Sheffield's Student Union teamed up with Vice Chancellor Keith Burnett and staff to create a campaign called We Are International. The campaign showcased the diversity of the

UK's student community, and highlights the important cultural contribution that international students make to their campuses, and to the UK at large.



**Figure 6.1** Map showing the location of Sheffield and other major cities in the UK

**Table 6.1** International student population in University of Sheffield and other major universities in the UK. (Source: UK Census 2011)

UK University	International student population
London	32.60%
Manchester	21.30%
Liverpool	18.10%
Birmingham	21.00%
Leeds	9.40%
<b>Sheffield</b>	<b>16.70%</b>
Oxford	13.80%
Durham	13.80%
Cardiff	10.80%
Cambridge	17.50%
Nottingham	16.00%

The urban demographics of Sheffield in terms of the international student population show it can stand as something of a 'typical' city in the UK (see Table 6.1), while its thriving multicultural population also allows it to be read as a typical contemporary 'urban entity'.

The international students in The University of Sheffield make up 16.70% of the total student population. Students live throughout the city, rather than in isolated enclaves, demonstrating just how easy it is to get around. The campus buildings are well spread and the city centre is largely walkable from different academic buildings, which makes the city centre area and other urban spaces and parks well connected to the students' circulation network (see Fig 6.2).





**Figure 6.2 The University of Sheffield campus spread and its proximity to the City Centre.** (Source: Re-drawn by the author based on Google map)

### **6.2.2 Data collection**

Data collection was carried out through in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews which was identified as a potentially rich methods through the exploratory study was employed for the main case study.



**Figure 6.3 Student Union Building, The University of Sheffield**

The purposive sampling for this research aimed for an overall diverse cultural background within the participants, who were recruited through personal contacts. The sample size for this research was based on the literature which recommended 5 to 25 participants for phenomenological research<sup>359</sup>, and 15 as a smallest acceptable sample for all qualitative research.<sup>360</sup> A total number of 15 international students were used as research participants. All participants had been living in Sheffield for a period of two to three years, Sheffield being their first experience of living outside their home country. The research participants included fifteen international PhD research students from China, Iran, Mexico, Thailand, Nigeria, Netherlands and Romania. The interview with the participants lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The participants were given the information sheet and consent forms which was approved by University of Sheffield research ethic committee to sought the permission of participant to recording the interview session.

Another appropriate visual research methods for this research which was discussed in the methodology section which is photo elicitation was also used to frame the interview questions. Some of the other tasks during the interviews included image ranking, image-word matching and sketching. Based on the second exploratory study, similar incidental spaces which were spread within the student circulation zone were photographed and used in for photo elicitation The

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<sup>359</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry and research design*, 64.

<sup>360</sup> Daniel Bertaux, "From the Life-history Approach to the Transformation of Sociological Practice.," in *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences*, ed. Daniel Bertaux (London: Sage, 1981), 29–45, 35.

incidental spaces identified for the study are located within this network and were also selected based on the following factors:

- ***Everyday life of international students***

The urban spaces included in the study were carefully identified for their ability in supporting everyday life of international students of Sheffield University. Such spaces enable an understanding of how contemporary spaces accommodate or allow everyday life and interaction, and how people respond to these spatial experiences.

- ***Loose spaces***

Spaces were deliberately chosen so as to avoid the overly 'designed' aspects of many contemporary cities. The urban spaces are closely related to 'loose spaces'<sup>361</sup> defined by their characteristic nature that accommodates and encourages casual and spontaneous uses of spaces (though some of the settings also included landmark buildings and features for the richness of their associated activities such as the Arts Tower, Castle Market building and the Student Union Building as shown in the images below.



Figure 6.5 Castle Market



Figure 6.4 Arts Tower

- ***Familiarity/Frequency of use***

Spaces were also chosen for their frequency of use and familiarity among the international student community, which facilitates a more detailed discussion of participant experiences with the spaces.

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<sup>361</sup> Franck and Stevens, *Loose space*.

A total of thirty images of various physical settings (numbered one to thirty) were used in the interview session (see map attached at the end of this chapter). These images included the everyday pathways leading to various university buildings, public parks within the circulation zone of the university students, spaces outside the student union building, bus stops, and city centre spaces (see Fig 6.3 , Fig 6.4 & Fig 6.5).

### *6.2.3 Interview tasks and analysis procedure*

From the images provided, participants were asked to:

- Choose 9 images which you can relate to, and rank them in order of preference
- Match the images chosen with the words (one or more) in the list provided
- Considering the space to be part of a public space, what would you add in this empty space to make yourself relate to the space?
- Considering the space to be part of a personal space, what would you add in this empty space to make yourself relate to the space?
- What would you add or remove in any of the pictures ranked (in the diamond 9) to make yourself relate more to the spaces shown?

Participants were asked to rank the images in a 'Diamond 9' template,<sup>362</sup> based on the extent to which each image and the experiences associated with it related to their identity. The participants then matched the chosen nine images to words in the wordlist provided during the interview. The Diamond 9 method was used as effective tool for promoting discussion, rather than to understand the order of the ranking.

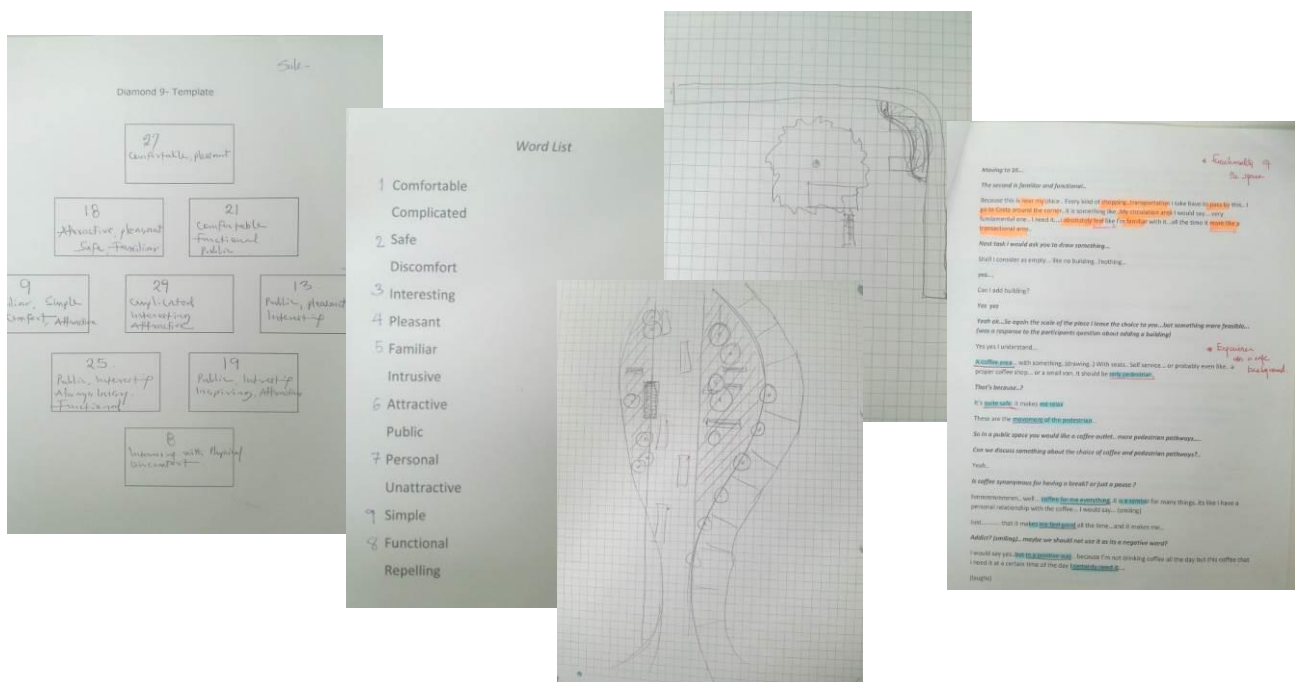
The word list included words such as 'comfort', 'safe', 'pleasant', 'complex' (see Fig 6.6), which were deliberately chosen for their broad and general connotations. This was for two reasons: firstly, to allow participants easily to choose and associate them with the images chosen; and secondly, to increase the opportunities for exploring the implicit meanings associated with common words describing spatial experiences.

In the final task of the session, the participants were asked to sketch places based on their personal choices and preferences about spatial aspects in public/personal spaces to make themselves 'fit in' to the places. Based on the sketch provided, follow-up questions were posed to help understand the deeper meanings of the spatial experiences represented, in terms of

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<sup>362</sup> Diamond 9 ranking allows participants rank their choices from most significant to least significant. The strength of the diamond 9 ranking lies in developing the interconnections between the various choices and basis on which it was organised by the participants.

participants' personal choices. Data at various stages were recorded using smart pen technology.<sup>363</sup> This also facilitated the transcription and synchronisation of data sets. As the research aimed to elicit deeper aspects of spatial experiences, the diverse methods of data collection and analysis were designed to play a crucial role in capturing the elusive and implicit aspects in the case study (see Appendix I for the individual participant's diamond 9 ranking and interview transcripts).

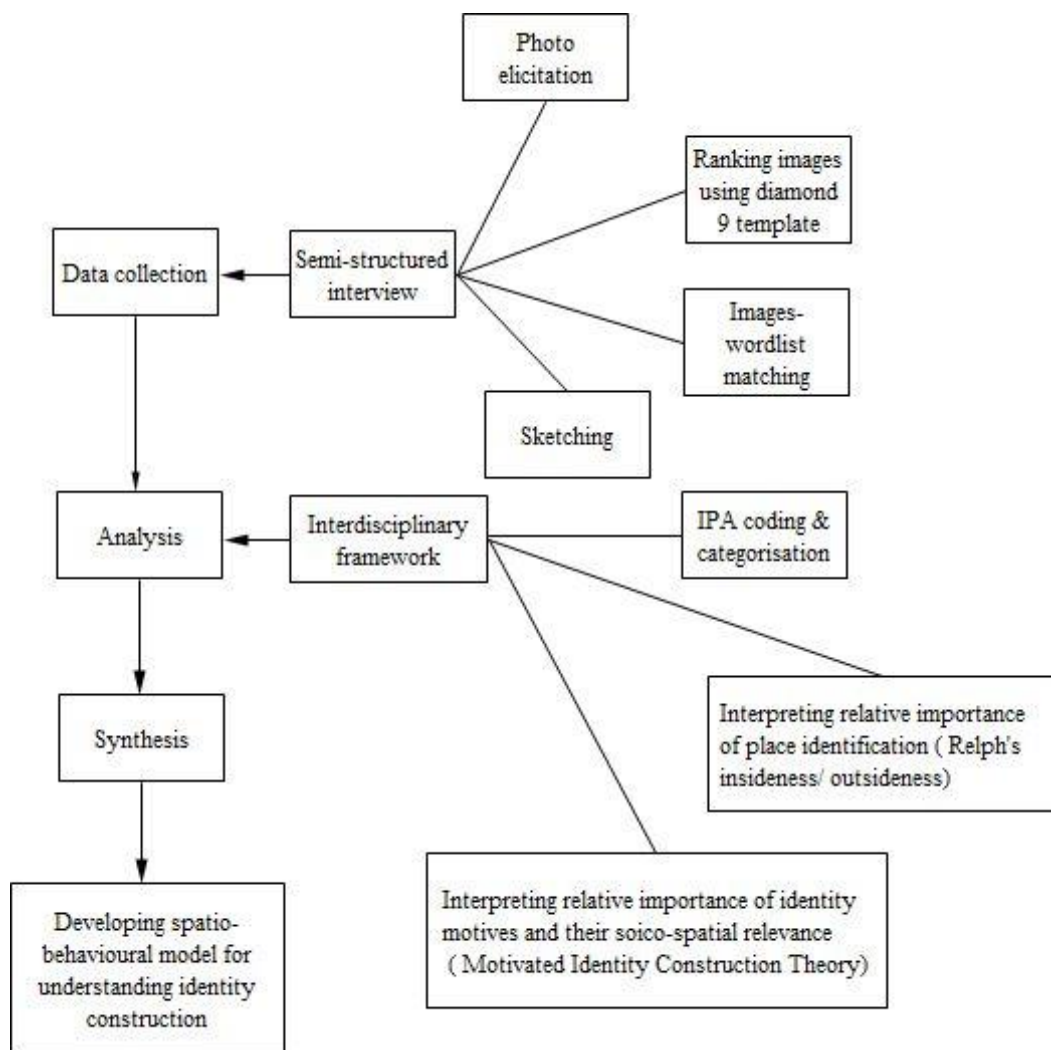


**Figure 6.6 Samples of data collection: Diamond 9 template, wordlist, sketching and interview transcript**

<sup>363</sup> Echo Smartpen is a ballpoint pen with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder. When used with Anoto digital paper, it records what it writes for later uploading to a computer, and synchronizes those notes with any audio it has recorded

The various tasks of the interview encouraged deeper discussions with participants and allowed them to have their own voice and words while describing and discussing place experiences. The tasks also facilitated in gathering multifarious and rich qualitative data which is of great importance for this research in investigating the complex phenomenon of identity and urban place experiences

The analysis employed an interdisciplinary framework which forms the crux of this research, developed from the concepts discussed in section 4.4. Following the analysis, various significant interconnections and themes emerged regarding the socio-spatial practices of the participants and their identity constructions. The interconnections and themes identified were instrumental in achieving the main aim of the study, which was to develop a socio-spatial understanding of identity constructions in multi-cultural urban spaces .



**Figure 6.7 Stages of Data collection , analysis and synthesis.** (Source: Drawn by the author)

The illustration above shows the various stages of data collection, analysis and synthesis in this research.

#### **6.2.4 Analysis**

The interview transcripts prepared from the data collection of the 15 participants (referred as P1 to P15) were coded and interpreted using the IPA method, allowing several themes to emerge which were analysed for their socio-cultural and spatial relevance. In the first stage, data was analysed, interpreted and categorised into three sub-categories from which emergent themes were identified.

- ***More spatial than socio cultural:***

When the participant's narratives placed more emphasis on the physical elements/factors (form, function, visual and aesthetic elements) of the places defining their experiences, the emergent themes were assumed to be more spatial than socio-cultural.

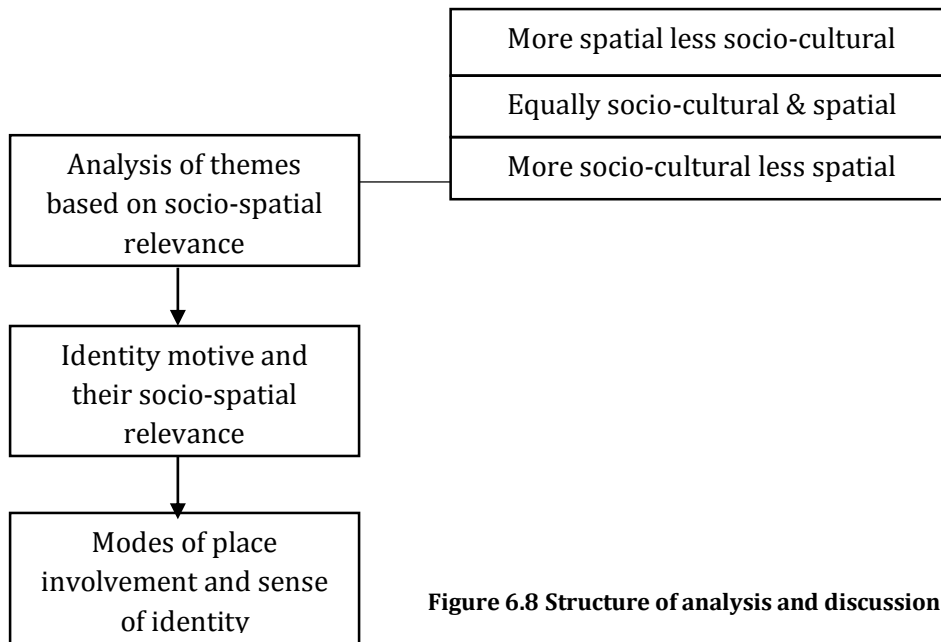
- ***More socio cultural than spatial:***

When the participant's narratives placed more emphasis on the socio-cultural elements/factors of the places (sense of privacy, religious attachments, life style etc) defining their experiences, the emergent themes were assumed to be more socio-cultural than spatial.

- ***Equally socio-cultural and spatial:***

When the participant's narratives implied equal emphasis on both socio-cultural and spatial elements(sense of enclosure, familiarity with places, enclosures etc) defining their experiences, the emergent themes were assumed to be equally socio-cultural and spatial.

In the second stage these themes were used for comprehending the relationship between the identity motives and spatial experiences of participants. Finally the prevalence of various levels of place involvement in the participants' narratives that enabled identity negotiations/construction were analysed. The following section discusses in detail the analysis and inferences developed, based on the interdisciplinary framework. Fig 6.8 illustrated below explains the structure of analysis and discussion.

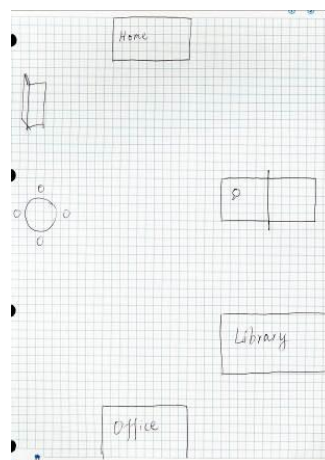


**Figure 6.8 Structure of analysis and discussion.** (Source: Drawn by the author)

#### **6.2.4.1 More spatial than socio-cultural**

For participants identifying with those urban spaces that were defined more by the spatial aspects of the environment, the themes that emerged consistently in most of their narratives were the notion of **visual appeal** of the place (landscape, natural setting, buildings), **familiarity** (frequency of use, everyday routine, proximity to home/work), **physical comfort and safety** (general safety, thermal comfort) and **functionality** (proximity, efficiency).

One of the participants, while locating his personal choice of place with which he identifies the most, began by sketching the overall physical context in which he would then locate his space in Fig 6.9 as,



**Figure 6.9 Sketch by [P9] locating the context in which he can discuss the spaces he would identify himself with**



*Which is the place I have to consider? [P9]*

Any place, any context, the choice is yours [I]

*So, maybe this is my home and this is my office, so this place should be between my home and office... [P9]*

Oh really? [I]

*Yes, that's what makes it more related to me [P9]*

Is it more to do with familiarity? [I]

*Hmmm. Yes. But also we are leading a life between two points, destination, so the line is important which is in-between home and work [P9]*

Another participant similarly began by locating the place where he would identify the most as ,

*I would normally say I related more in areas around my house and university than city centre... [P13]*

Although the usage the term 'every day' superficially reflects the timely frequency of the activities or situation, the notion of Lefebvre's 'everyday' is implicit unconsciously. This can be particularly noted in way [P9] discusses locating the context in which he would start thinking more in detail about how the space should be in that context where he can identify himself. The participant unselfconsciously mentions that any space where he could identify himself invariably has to exist between the home and office. Here the act of choosing the context between home and office does not merely reflect the need of familiarity of any space in which one identifies oneself, but also the need for the space to be a part of the journey (the line) between two important destinations in one's everyday life. This presupposes the essence of everyday life to be inherently connected to spatial experiences that enables people's identity constructions.

The feeling of comfort in urban spaces, which was expressed as a significant factor that enabled participants to develop their sense of identity, was the extent of spatial freedom the environment offered. This was explained in terms of participants' desire for uncluttered spaces, clarity in circulation, spaces without obstacles (behavioural restriction) and wider choices in using such spaces. One of the participants observed that a spatial experience which accommodated spontaneity to pause allowed them to be comfortable as it relieves the need to be cautious while strolling in a public space.

Could you explain why have you written 'comfortable' for this place Fig 6.10? [I]

*For me this place is comfortable because this is where you can stop it does not make you uncomfortable to stop there [P3]*

The participant further compares this place to another one, and continues,

*For instance in this place (in Fig 6.11), if I would choose to sit here, it will look weird, If I stand here it's okay in the pretext of watching the ducks, the space does not accommodate what I wish to do [P3]*



**Figure 6.10** Image discussed by [P3] in the above excerpt explaining the space allowing spontaneous behaviour, seating areas, Western park, Sheffield



**Figure 6.11** Image discussed by [P3] in the above excerpt concerning how space restricts the wish to sit or stop by Western park pond, Sheffield

These experiences underlie the implicit desire to reduce the pace and experience of more spontaneous spatial experience compared to places which are largely characterised by staged behaviour and activity patterns.

One of the prominent spatial aspects which underlie the narratives were the preference for simplicity in spatial structures. Most of the participants starting to sketch their choice of space saying,

*I like the space to be simple. [P9]*

*I want to see the physical world more clear and more tidy as there is already so much chaos in mind so real life to be more tidy [P6]*

*I need to have clear space around me and like to keep them clear I don't like a mess on my table I tend to keep my space as free as possible [P10]*

*The place should be comfortable simple not complicated, not too many things as it blocks our imagination. [P4]*

In the above excerpts it is seen that clear preference was given to spaces which alleviate the complexity of contemporary urban environment, where simplicity in spatial experiences acts as a counter balance.

One of the participants also observed that the simplicity of spatial characteristics can also play a significant role in experiencing places more deeply (see Fig:6.12)

*Yes it just a set of stairs there is nothing special about the space and it's just that it is in-between two places having strong characters. It's a simple transition between two completely different modes [P3]*



**Figure 6.12 Image discussed by [P3] in the above excerpt, entrance from Western back library to the park, Sheffield**

Similar notions were also discussed by another participant who was Chinese (P14), and who ranked the above image the highest and described his experience of using that space as follows,

*Yes, every time I need to go the tennis club, I use these steps and I feel quite good with these steps when I go there I'm always in a good mood... and I'm familiar with the place because of my tennis classes and I like to take this way to go to play [P14]*

can I assume that it is more about the space which this place is leading you together than the steps itself that is the reason for your choice ?[I]

*yes may be its not the steps but it's about the transition to the space. [P14]*

Almost all the participants expressed an affinity towards natural landscape elements such as water bodies, plants and trees, and considered these to be an important aspect of places that they identify themselves with. Often the need for passive entertainment in urban spaces (such as watching people engaged in activities) was mentioned as a strong factor to enable the feeling of connectedness with the environment.

One of the participants recounted how she felt a strong empathetic attachment to a particular urban space, which stemmed from her sense of being a 'passively active' part of the activities that she perceived as harmoniously fitting in their context:

*My mom was here during summer on a weekend, it was a sunny day and they had a stage here and lot of young people performed, playing music all day, it was fantastic and I almost felt I belonged there with the people and with the activities.[P10] (refer Fig:6.25)*

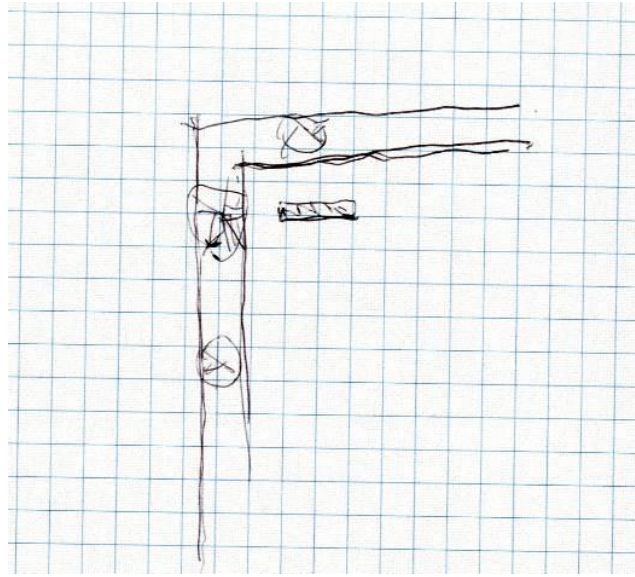
In the category of themes that manifested equal socio-cultural and spatial relevance were the notions of privacy/sense of enclosure and user group comfort. Participants from different ethnic backgrounds clearly expressed different ways in which they perceived the need for privacy in urban spaces. For example, female Iranian participants expressed this need of privacy and sense of enclosure in public spaces more strongly (preference for physically defined elements and corner space) whereas female Romanians and male Chinese participants were content with places where they were not the centre of attention. Different notions of defining boundaries existed in participants' narratives.

Another participant, when drawing her personal choice of space to which she related herself, began with a strong demarcating feature,

*A fence... [P3]*

Is this a sort of enclosure?[I]

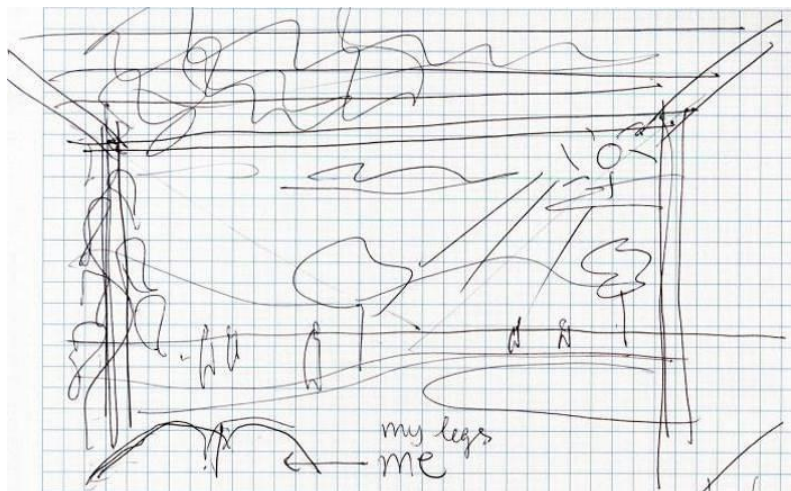
*'Yes a fence'. Pointing at the space outside the fence she drew, she says 'this is anything outside my world...' [P3]*



**Figure 6.13 Sketch by [P3] demarcating the personal and outside world with fence**

Where one participant noted activities and seating areas to suggestively demarcate various territories, another participant noted explicit boundaries which distinguishes and simultaneously symbolised 'her' world and the 'outside' world.

One of the male participants (Thai) described the setting in which he would prefer to have a view of a scenic park. Firstly he located his position in his drawing his legs, from which the entire scene in front of him unfolded as he sketched.



**Figure 6.14 Sketch by [P13] demarcating the personal and outside world with fence**

*this is my legs, I'm sitting and watching the other side and hmmm this is some plants climbers and semi enclosed structures or may be a kind of frame. the main thing is it's good to have some kind of private space in a public space, so that I can observe comfortably the people, activities and nature [P13]*

so any place which has this kind of ambience you can relate yourself to such place?[I]

*maybe no because there could be some more factors that might make me uncomfortable.. for example if people happen to be criminals like (laughing), in general spatially this is the space I could relate myself to [P13]*

In this case, unlike some of the Iranian participants' notions of the absolute need for privacy, boundaries are here manifested through the semi-enclosed frame with the climbing plants, which presents a sense of comfort which enabled the participant a deeper engagement with the environment. However it is important to highlight how the notion of safety takes over the other visual aspects when identifying oneself with a place.

#### **6.2.4.2 Equally socio-cultural and spatial**

Amongst the themes which were defined equally by socio-cultural and spatial parameters of place experiences, the most prominent and frequently occurring themes were **familiarity** and **belonging to a place** (derived from similarity to their native spatial elements), **user group comfort**, **socio-psychological comfort**, and **territoriality**. The main theme of discussion here was how participants' spatial experience revealed interesting yet implicit manifestation and negotiations of their need to 'belong' to the place. Participants expressed strong affinity and associations with urban spaces which enabled spatial reinterpretations that linked to their socio-cultural identity in terms of the architectural features or the kind of activities present in the urban environment. One of the Nigerian participants [P7] describes the shopping street in Sheffield city centre which he related to himself the most as,



**Figure 6.15 Image discussed by [P7] in the above excerpt Fargate, Sheffield City Centre**

*Oh is it called Fargate?, I didn't know that. But I feel like I'm at home here. There are pedestrian pathways where we walk down the market and we got shops on the right and left... and normally unlike shops here, the shop in my home country are only outside and people call... 'Come to my shop...' 'Come to my shop'... 'I've got this...' 'I've got that...' [P7]*

Another participant from Nigeria [P8] in sketching the personal choice of place where he would identify the most, chooses a park context and explains,

*I will say I will have a park with more trees and seats under the trees and some place like a tent... similar to those in my village it feels nice and relaxed. [P8] (Nigerian)*



**Figure 6.16 Sketch by [P8] showing tent structures and park**

In the first case although the shopping street in Sheffield presented a setting similar to any other UK city, due to the pedestrian-friendly nature of this urban setting with informal spaces encouraging social interaction has enabled the participant to link it to the more vibrant nature of market street he had experienced in his home country. The second case clearly indicates the participant's preference for spatial elements; in this case, a tent which instantly provides him with a sense of relaxation as the structure connects him to the park and to Sheffield. Both the responses indicated students' tendencies to search for spatial aspects which reflected their native experiences that facilitated in developing a sense of identity with urban environment in Sheffield. What is interesting to note is the concept of linking some of the places not just with the similarities but also through the differences in the spatial structures, by which they recollect their native place and hence evoke a sense of belonging.

Although these themes were defined by the socio-cultural background of participants, they are realised through spatial manifestations. For instance, one of the male Chinese participants, while explaining the notion of territoriality, discussed his preference for circular forms of seating area along with a road defining its location which marks the space of his group when using an urban space. Additionally, the participant highlighted how such an arrangement could give them more privacy from other student groups. Similarly Iranian female participants rarely engaged themselves in some urban spaces which are busy, as they felt uncomfortable due to the sense that they were being watched. In this case, although the participants' socio-cultural background defined the meaning of 'comfort,' it was influenced and further defined by the particular spatiality of places.

A Mexican male participant preferred public spaces that accommodated his socio-cultural life style.

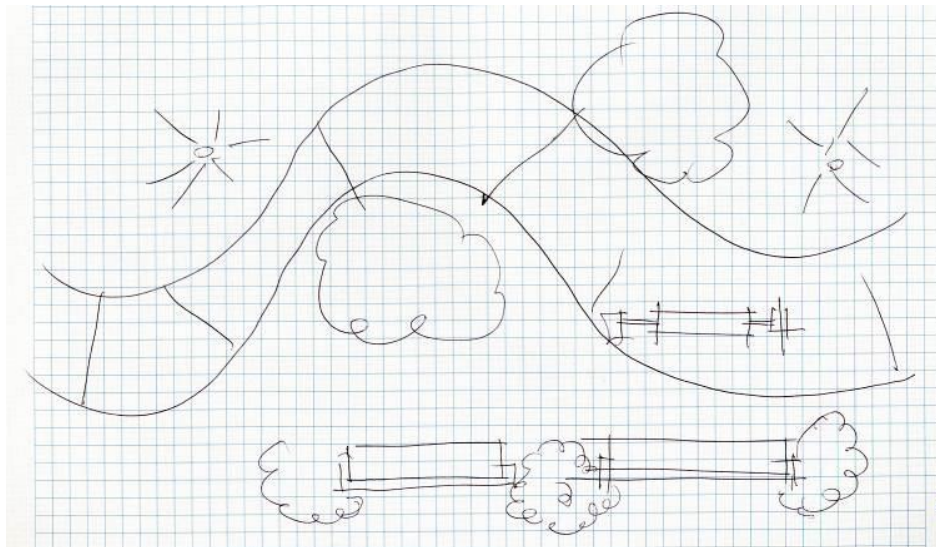


Figure 6.17 Sketch by [P2] showing seating areas

*Okay... In any public space I would like to have lots of seating because I have family and we have to look after the children so I like such spaces, which has lots of flowers, colours. Hmm...playgrounds for children or some kind of attraction for children to engage... some playing equipment like a see saw [P2]*

#### 6.2.4.3 More socio-cultural than spatial

Those themes that placed more emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of place experience and which encouraged the sense of identity for participants were **religious needs, nostalgic place memories,** and the **sense of community/social life.** Participants' religious backgrounds played



a significant role in determining the personal choice of places they could identify themselves with. In this context, the proximity of a mosque or church, meeting people with similar religious belief, and the resulting social life, emerged as an important need for participants identifying with a specific urban environment. Describing the place of his personal choice, one of the participants asserted the need for the place to address his religious needs which also becomes the crux for his social life.

*I'm a Muslim: my religion plays a very important part so where ever I'm staying now I have access to the mosque. So that would affect me the proximity to the mosque is very important for me.[P7]*

Is it more about the practical aspect of the proximity of the mosque ? [I]

*Yes but the point is: I need to pray and in a way helps me to mingle with my people. The social aspects I mean, When I go to pray, it makes me comfortable with my people. We meet say 'Hi, Salaam' [P7]*

Participants' narratives also expressed an empathetic attachment with urban spaces that allowed them to recollect memories associated with their native and childhood memories.

Answering to the question where the participant [P2] identified himself the most and asked to sketch the same, he said

*I would also prefer this space to be near a beach or generally a sea side, yes I like to have that personal space near sea side.[P2]*

Why is that?[I]

*I don't know.. maybe it's just the complexity of the work activities and the need to experience a complete contrast which will be the sea a relaxing place.[P2]*

With further probing about the explanation:

But why not a park or any other place instead of a sea? [I]

*Maybe because I grew up on an island which is a small one surrounded by sea, so maybe this is related to my childhood memory. [P2]*

One of the female participants from Iran provided an interesting account about the image which showed the students' hub outside the student union building (refer Fig 6.18) where the majority of the crowd include both native and international students. The space was characterized by informal interaction activities and student's charity stalls. She acknowledged the importance of the above space in the overall student life, but voiced some concerns,

*Yes it is a space which is essential for student life but there's some discomfort, as the space is largely for movement, if it has... hmmm... I think it should have more elements like activities or seating areas or some kind of enclosure properly [P11]*



**Figure 6.18 Image discussed by [P11] in the above excerpt, Student Union Building,**

Interestingly, the space does accommodate various activities but the fluidity and the openness of the space, which lacks a sense of enclosure and privacy, has created discomfort for the participant to engage with the space. Similar notions of a need for privacy in open / public spaces was expressed by another female participant [P1] from Iran when describing her experience in public spaces:

*In this place there are benches, but it's always occupied full or there is no privacy here. I prefer that more. For example I do not use the bus stop because no seating there also, it feels like people are always watching so I prefer some benches in the corner [P1]*



**Figure 6.19 Image discussed by [P1] Peace Gardens, Sheffield**

In the above statement, participant [P1] links the absence of seats with privacy issues, explaining the discomfort of the participant of not having a sense of enclosed area space where she could choose to be in the absence of a seating area.

All the above narratives show the different perceptions of spaces by international students, indicating the influences of socio-cultural conditioning of participants in engaging and identifying themselves with various urban environments. During the interviews when participants discussed their personal space, whether enclosed or outdoor, the prominent theme that emerged was the notion of openness and inside/outside connectedness. Participants viewed this characteristic feature of urban spaces as providing them with a sense of safety, escape from feeling isolated. Excerpts of narratives which described this notion are given below.

*.... I like to see outside as well. it depends, when you are in a closed space and you can't see anywhere outside, I don't have a good feeling. I like to have a feeling that I'm not isolated in that place, I prefer to be in a corner if not I will try to put something and create a sense of enclosure.[P15]*

*I like open spaces. I don't like very much closed spaces so spaces with windows.. I think I feel safe. When it's open, that's the main point I relate more to feeling safe when its open don't like too much spaces that doesn't have windows. Or I prefer always be in a place where I don't look at the wall and I look at the windows. Outside, but I think, I relate it more to safety. [P5]*

Multiple layers of meaning emerged from participants' responses on accommodating themselves in public spaces. One of the female Iranian participants from her conversation while sketching her personal choice of public space where would identify the most, explained,

*A coffee area with seats... self service or probably even like a proper coffee shop or a small van... it should be pedestrian as its safe and make me relaxed [P11]*

Does choosing coffee shop is synonymous for having a break? Or just a pause? [I]

*Hmmm, well coffee for me is everything. It is symbol for many things...It's like I have personal relationship with the coffee. I would say [smiling] [P11]*

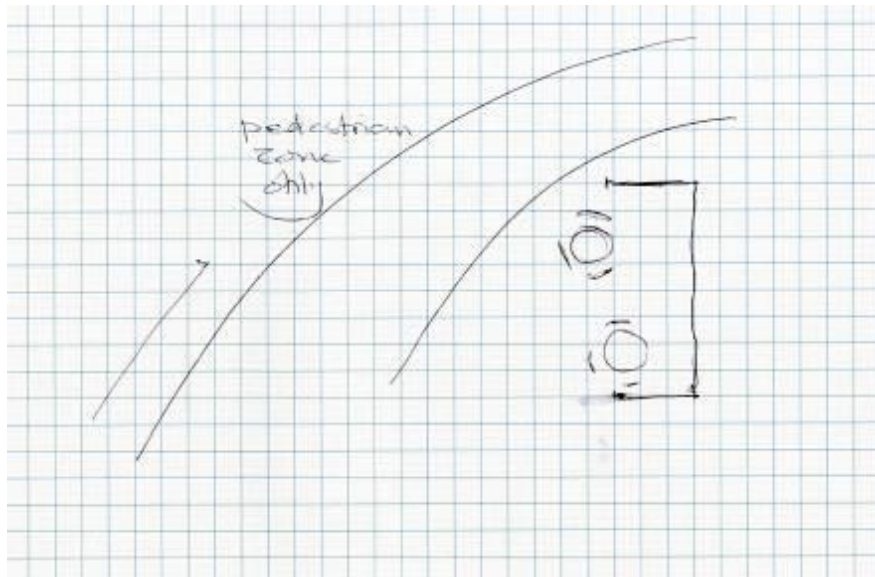


Figure 6.20 Sketch by [P8] showing tent structures and park

Further probing into the participant's coffee habits revealed implicit connection with the socio-cultural aspects of her narrative:

*A coffee area in a public space makes me feel good; it makes public space for me a better place or maybe some kind of a social thing. Maybe I cannot see myself sitting in a public space doing nothing, holding a cup is doing something. Gives me a reason to sit in a public space. [P11]*

Why do you think you cannot sit not doing anything? [I]

*Probably whenever I sit without doing anything, it's just, I don't feel personal. If I'm busy doing something, I'm doing my own thing. [P11]*

It is observed that apart from the physical elements (in this case, the enclosure) which allow the participant to accommodate herself in the public spaces, it is also the activities they perform which helps them to negotiate the urban environment. The above participant's place interaction implies what Castells explains that although spatial meanings are culturally created, their final meaning depends on people's interaction with the places.<sup>364</sup>

The following Table 5.2 shows the summary of various themes derived from the analysis of the interview transcripts using IPA. The themes are categorized and colour-coded according to the socio-cultural and spatial relevance of each theme. This colour-coding is followed throughout the analysis.

<sup>364</sup> Castells, "Space of flows, space of places: materials for a theory of urbanism in the information age."

<b>Summary of emergent themes and their socio-cultural and spatial relevance</b>		
<b>Socio-cultural &gt;Spatial</b>	<b>Equally Spatial &amp; Socio-cultural</b>	<b>Spatial &gt; Socio-cultural</b>
Religious needs	Historic/grandness	Inside/Outside connectedness
Nostalgic place memories	Similarities to native places	Nature
Childhood associations	User group comfort	spatial freedom
Entertainment	sense of enclosure	Functional
Social life	More observer/ less observed	Uncluttered spaces
Territoriality	Memory objects	Safety-natural surveillance
Familiarity through native spatial experiences	Familiarity-Personal experiences	Attractiveness
	Visual and physical connectedness	Everyday connectivity
	Inspiring	Entertainment
	Visual appeal	belonging in relation to home/ everyday activities
	tactile experience	safety
	Socio psychological comfort	personal meaning
		Unselfconscious behaviour
		Convenience
		Physical comfort
		Haptic experiences
		Sense of Ownership

**Table 6.2 Themes developed using IPA.** (Source: Drawn by the author)

#### **6.2.4.4 Identity motives and their socio-spatial relevance**

The themes under all three categories discussed above were analysed for their interconnections with the various identity motives (namely Distinctiveness, Meaning, Continuity, Belonging, Self-esteem and Efficiency) and their socio-cultural and spatial relevance/ significance in participants' place experience as this related to identity constructions. Belonging and Distinctiveness were manifest as the most prominent identity motive in the place experiences of 12 and 9 participants respectively. Distinctiveness was attached to themes which involved more spatial elements (for instance, the historicity of the structure, native style of buildings, the significance of the activities which the spaces lead into etc). One of the Nigerian participants, P7, described his reasons for choosing the below image as top ranked in his list



**Figure 6.21 Image discussed by [P1] Western Park (Main Gates), Sheffield**

*I chose this because its familiar to me. I like the gate especially because it's like something huge and historic it gives a different experience as I you are entering something..[P7]*

Here it is the style and the scale of the gates to the park which defined the characteristic nature of entering something significant which the participant experienced.

Belonging was manifest through participants expressing the importance they attached to native place memories, user group comfort, and social life. Recollecting her memories of her native place, another Thai participant described how the park presents itself to her as a harmonious setting,

And what about this place, could you tell me the reasons for ranking this high?[I]

*The atmosphere of the park is beautiful, green space and water. Back home my house is close to the river and I have lived there for 23 years, my village also has similar bridge so this reminds me my place, makes me more relaxed and peaceful [P4] (Refer Fig:38)*

While Distinctiveness was largely manifest through the spatial elements of participants' experiences, Belonging was defined through both spatial and socio-cultural aspects. Meaning was also defined by more both socio-cultural and spatial aspects of participants' experiences although

there were narratives which related meaning to past experiences and memories attached to that place.

Participants ranked highly those places that allowed them moments of reflection and contemplation, for experiences associated with the places facilitated the interaction with one's self. Interestingly, one of the participants also noted that despite not having visited a particular place often, she identified with this place the most, since it provided her with a sense of personal restoration.

*I have been here few times. It's like, while I'm walking in the city and as I'm tired, I just want to have a relaxing time Sitting in the bench, Drinking coffee.. and thinking about my PhD. About me and many things and I thinks that's the way I'm relating myself with the place. Something personal. In the city centre I think this place is the place I usually choose if I want to stop for a while that's why I think it's 'personal' to me. [P5]*

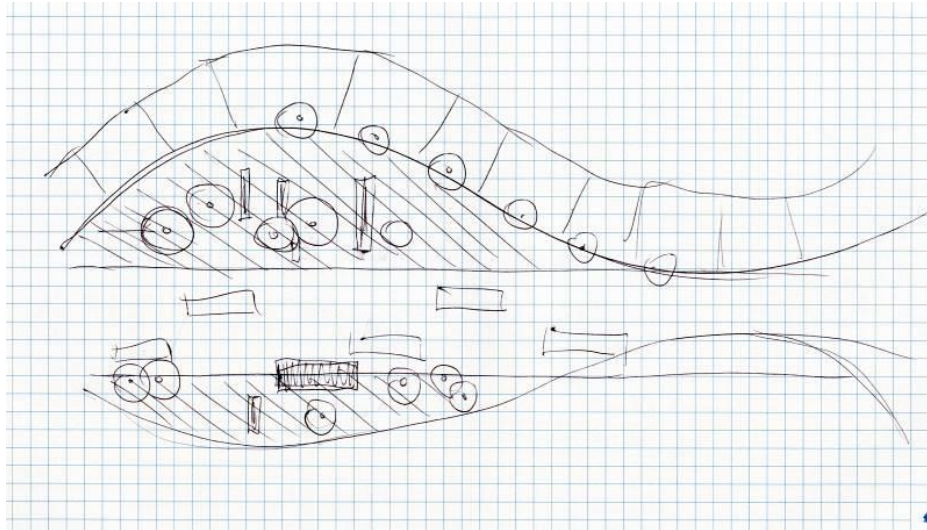


**Figure 6.22 Image discussed by [P5] in the above excerpt. Seating areas towards Sheffield city centre**

Amidst the busy and visually dominating places in the city centre it is the quality of ordinariness of the space, in this case seating areas in the urban space, which allows the emergence of the sense of self in this individual.

Participants described walking as one of the most prominent ways in which they would wish to manoeuvre through the space and experience the settings.

*...the way I walk in the street is different it's not stressful, it's not. I do not like [it] when people are just walking in one direction. It's different when you have open spaces when you walk more slowly. And you can really look what are around [P5]*



**Figure 6.23 Sketch by [P5] showing the walking space she would prefer to feel related to the space**

*I would just want to walk over areas just to experience... [P10]*

Paul C Adams explains the deep sense of place produced through walking, referring it as 'peripatetic'<sup>365</sup> (Greek *peri* meaning around, *patein*, meaning to walk). According to Adams, 'to walk through a place is to become involved in that places with sight, hearing, touch, smell, the kinetic sense and even taste'.<sup>366</sup> The multisensory experiences draw people closer to their environment, enabling for deeper understanding and interaction with the environment. Peripatetic place-experience can be seen as a significant spatial practice consciously and unconsciously adopted people, as in it 'lies the basis of [a] special kind of knowledge of the world and one's place in it'.<sup>367</sup>

A relatively slower pace of movement is noted as an important criterion to engage meaningfully with the environment, reinforcing the urban dwellers implicit understanding of the significance

<sup>365</sup> Paul C Adams, "Peripatetic Imagery and Peripatetic Sense of Place," in *Textures of place: exploring humanist geographies*, ed. Paul C Adams, Steven D Hoelscher, and Karen E Till (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 186–206.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.



of the fleeting present and its vanishing role for a meaningful existence<sup>368</sup>. A need for freedom in manoeuvring through the space also emerged as a significant factor, which was largely described in terms of clarifying boundaries of movement, allowing choice of pace and pedestrian safety. Though walking often is itself a necessary act<sup>369</sup>, it is the spatial dimension which defines the appropriateness for rich experience and 'regulating the human level of tolerance for interferences encountered.'<sup>370</sup>

Some of the themes which revealed the meaningful experiences attached to identity construction were social life along with family in urban spaces, everyday connectedness and place engagement through activities. Everydayness was manifest in various ideas, from simple viewing through the window to observing the activities associated in that place:

*I see this (park) everyday from my window sometimes when I'm so tired I just look into this space the bridge and its pleasant too[P2]*

*Is it also because you have visited and experienced this place that you have ranked this place high?[I]*

*No, I think it's more because I see this place every day from place where I work, where I spend more time [P2]*



**Figure 6.24 Image discussed by [P2] in the above excerpt. Western park, Sheffield**

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<sup>368</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

<sup>369</sup> Gehl, *Life between buildings*, 134.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.135

The place becomes the part of the participant's everyday life; in this case the view of the park is a part of the everyday spatial experience in his office, and by effectively relieving the work stress and tiredness it emerges as a significant part of his office space.

*I will tell you what. Look at this window (in the picture) that's my place that's my flat. This is a view which I see every day I get from inside my house, this part of the place [P11]*



**Figure 6.25 Image discussed by [P11] in the above excerpt where she locates her flat window through which she views this space everyday. Peace Gardens, Sheffield**

The Efficiency motive was prevalent to the same extent as the Distinctiveness motive. The Efficiency motive emerged from those narratives where the participants indicated the functional efficiency of the urban spaces as an important criterion to developing of sense of identity with that environment. While Continuity and Self-esteem motives rarely occurred in the participants' experiences, interestingly some of the themes raised did not fit under any of the aforementioned motives. It is important to note that all the participants' narratives suggested the prevalence of non-categorical motives which indicates how considering spatial aspects of people identity experiences introduces several other interesting factors in identity studies, to name a few physical comfort, inside/outside connectedness, spatial freedom, and familiarity, sense of enclosure, territoriality (see section 6.2.4.2). It is also interesting to note that the Continuity motive was not reflected in the participants' narratives, and the Self-esteem motive was reflected in only one participant's identity-related place experiences, again highlighting how non-categorical motives can not only offer renewed understanding of peoples' identity construction but also provide important cues for comprehending and addressing the significant concepts of

territoriality and boundaries (that was reflected in the participants' narratives), which varies for diverse cultural groups and individuals.

Identity Motives and their socio-spatial relevance															
Identity Motives	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15
Distinctiveness		Dark Red	Dark Red	Light Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red			Dark Red				Dark Red
Meaning				Light Red	Dark Red					Dark Red	Light Red	Light Red	Light Red	Light Red	Light Red
Continuity															
Belonging	Light Red	Light Red		Light Red		Dark Red	Light Red	Light Red	Light Red	Light Red	Dark Red	Light Red		Light Red	Light Red
Self-esteem													Light Red		
Efficiency		Dark Red		Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red	Dark Red					Dark Red
Non-categorical	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey

Table 6.3 Identity motives analysis

Based on the analysis of identity motives and their socio-spatial significance inferred from the narratives of 15 participants, a summary of their responses was tabulated as shown in Table 5.4. From the above Table 5.3 it can be observed that the maximum number of identity motives and most prevalent combination that occurred in participant narratives (In 5 participants) were Distinctiveness, Belonging, and Efficiency, in addition to Non-categorical motives, followed by the combinations of Meaning, Belonging and Non-categorical motives (in 6 participants' place experiences). It suggests the relative significance of the combinations of identity motives and their associations with identity constructions

In Table 6.3 Individual cells are colour-coded, referring to the extent of socio cultural and spatial relevance attached to each motive. Another important observation that can be derived from the above is that the characteristic nature of the various motives which are colour coded (similar to Table 6.2). Where the motives did not occur in a participant's place experiences, the respective cells are left blank. While Distinctiveness and Efficiency motives largely emphasised the spatial aspects of people experiences, Meaning and Belonging motives involved both socio-cultural and spatial aspects of people's experiences. In this stage of the analysis it became difficult to explain the socio-spatial relevance of responses, due to the complexity of non-categorical motives; hence the coding with grey colour indicates only the prevalence of non-categorical motives in each participant. Analysis of the identity motives based on the various sub-themes that emerged in the

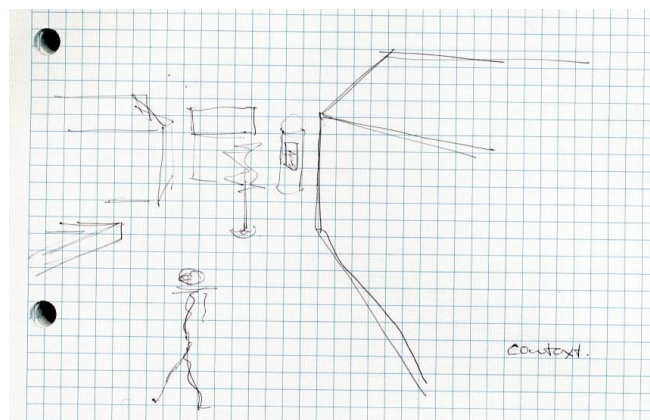
first stage of analysis explains the complex factors intertwined in place and identity relationships experiences by the participants. While the analysis importantly identified the prevalence of non-categorical motives in identity related experiences, it also evidenced the significance of Distinctiveness, Belonging and Meaning motives proposed by the Motivated Identity Construction Theory.

#### **6.2.4.5 Modes of place involvement and sense of identity**

In the final stage of the analysis, participants' narratives were studied in order to comprehend the modes of place involvement experienced in urban spaces that were related to participant identity construction. Table 5.4 illustrates the presence (cells coloured) and absence (blank cells) of various modes of place involvement that occurred in the participants' experiences. It can be observed that Existential Outsideness (complete alienation from the place) and Vicarious Insideness (indirect experience of places) rarely occurred in the participants' narratives. Behavioural Insideness was the most prevalent (14 participants) mode of place involvement in identity-related experiences, followed by Objective Outsideness (13 participants) and Empathetic Insideness (12 participants). One of the Dutch participants [P12] described her spatial experiences and understanding of various images she related to as follows:

*For me, I don't know I get a lot of ego from my work so my self is embedded in what I am as a student, professional. So it take a higher priority in my life compared to other places... because my work is my context.[P12]*

*What I think is. to relate myself to the context, is to partly have people. but people are actually least important. It's the familiarity of the buildings and the surroundings. knowing that there is something that I would know, I could see something and recognise this is in public urban space. yeah, it's the context then I can actually go and engage. It's the pavement, rocks, trees which gives a sense of framework.[P12] (refer Fig 6.26)*



**Figure 6.26 Image discussed by [P1] Peace Gardens, Sheffield**

You mean to say it's more if a place helps you to locate yourself there? [I]

*Yes through locating it gives a sense of comfort. Its gives myself an identity within it, am I familiar? am I part of the context? Am I an alien in this context?[P12]*

The above excerpts indicate how urban space engagement that enabled identity construction involved experiences that were visual, emotional and physical in nature. It is important to note here that places that allowed logical reasoning and efficiency (in terms of safety, location and functional aspects of a place) played an equally significant role as the observable qualities, visual patterns (created by the visual appeal of the place) and emotional experiences (associated with the notions of sense of belonging). It was also observed that complete unselfconscious involvement with the people was notably prevalent (8 participants) in the experiences of participants pertaining to identity construction.

Place involvement and sense of identity relationship															
Modes of Place involvement	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15
Existential insiderness		■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■				
Empathetic Insiderness	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	
Behavioural Insiderness	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Vicarious Insiderness										■					
Incidental Outsiderness								■		■		■	■	■	■
Objective Outsiderness	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Existential Outsiderness															

**Table 6.4 Modes of place involvement analysis**

Analysing the various levels of place involvement in individual participant's narratives, it was observed that Empatheic Insiderness, Behavioural Insiderness and Objective Outsiderness simultaneously existed in 10 participants' narratives. The characteristic nature of these three levels are highly comparable with the notions of Distinctiveness, Belonging and Efficiency, which were are also highly prevalent and coexisted in some of the participant's narratives. This indicates the significance of distinctive experiences, visual quality, belonging and functionality of a place for developing a sense of identity with that place.

### 6.3 Conclusion

This chapter explained the main case study of this research and discussed the analysis. The first stage of analysis identified several themes which were categorised based on the relative

importance of socio-cultural and spatial elements reflected in the respective themes. Table 6.2 highlights significance of spatial practices in studying identity construction and also the relative importance of spatial elements over social-cultural aspects in the participants narratives. The analysis of the identity motives within the participant narratives highlighted the significance of understanding identity from a socio-spatial perspective by revealing other factors such as the non-categorical motives and nature of place involvement related to identity experiences which remain elusive from a discipline-specific perspective. The various modes of place experiences which were related to identity experiences were examined and it was shown that the physical and visual aspects of place experiences plays an important part of identity experiences in the participants narrative (prevalence of Empathetic Insideness, Behavioural Insideness and Objective Outsideness )The main case study inferences are instrumental in addressing the overall research question and objectives which is delineated in the next chapter. The chapter serves as crux of this research, as the various subthemes and inferences are further discussed to be developed as a theoretical model for studying identity in the next chapter. The various stages of analysis are also further developed into an interdisciplinary framework and presented as the methodological contribution in the next chapter.

## Chapter 7

## Summary and Conclusion

### 7.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis presents the summary and contribution of this research. The summary explains the premise of the research and how the research design was developed to address the research aims and questions. The methodological and theoretical problems in identity research are discussed separately, following which the contribution of this research towards addressing these problems will be explained. The chapter delineates the theoretical and methodological contributions of this thesis to identity studies. The theoretical contribution is established as a set of socio-spatial propositions for studying identity construction developed from the study. The methodological contribution presents an interdisciplinary framework for understanding the complexity of identity construction. The explanation is supported through illustration. The chapter also explains the limitations of the research and explores the trajectories for future research.

### 7.2 Summary

The present thesis sets out to understand identity constructions and negotiations in multicultural urban environment. Building on the issues of multiculturalism and identity in contemporary cities, this research addresses the following key question:

What is the role of place in peoples' identity construction/negotiation in multicultural urban environment?

Based on the casestudies the objectives of this research are

- To comprehend the concept of identity in the light of contemporary spatial practices of international students in Sheffield.
- To identify the implications of socio-spatial aspects of people and place experiences for identity construction and negotiation in multicultural urban environments.
- To examine the relative significance of socio-cultural and spatial factors in identity construction.
- To explore the relationship between the notions of identity motives and socio-spatial practices of international students.

- To understand the relationship between different modes of place experience and identity construction.

The thesis (in Chapter 1) began by bringing into focus the complexities of identity and highlighted the significant role of place in understanding people's identity construction. Exploring the urban complexities (in Chapter 2) this thesis brought to light the need for a renewed multi-dimensional approach for addressing these complexities. Striving to address this need (in Chapter 3) an interdisciplinary approach was identified as the best means to address the research question, and various relevant concepts pertaining to people, place and identity in human geography, phenomenology and social psychology were discussed and the need for a common thread to connect these disciplines was also highlighted. To delve into the multi-layered and multifaceted relationship between identity, people and place the research required a strong methodology that enabled the complexity of the phenomenon which has multiple overlapping layers of socio-cultural and spatial experiences to be captured, while at the same time allowing the significant interrelationships between various aspects to emerge in the process. To address this requirement, the research adopted a qualitative case study strategy and employed diverse methods of data collection that included in-depth semi-structured interviews, sketching, photo elicitation and word-image matching. Based on concepts from human geography, phenomenology and social psychology, an interdisciplinary framework was developed to analyse the rich and complex data which was the basis to the methodological contributions of this study (Chapter 4).

Identification of the case study research context in multicultural urban spaces in Sheffield was discussed and the significance of everyday urban spatial experience for this research was highlighted. Based on the research context, two exploratory case studies were conducted to understand the people's perceptions on place and identity, identify specific cases for main study and also to refine the methods and techniques of data collection were presented (Chapter 5). The main case study for the research was based in Sheffield due to the significant proportion and diversity of its international student population, a favourable case for this research. The diverse data collection methods and interdisciplinary framework enabled an understanding of the significant inter-relationships between various socio-cultural and spatial practices to identity construction of international student communities in everyday urban spaces in Sheffield (Chapter 6)

The emergent themes and the interconnection of the various aspects of participants' identity experiences relating to other disciplinary concepts and theories was discussed and synthesised



(in Chapter7). Drawing from the inferences of the case study analysis and discussion, the two main contributions of this research are presented: firstly, a theoretical contribution, proposing a socio-spatial understanding of identity in multicultural urban environments addressing the lack of interdisciplinary understanding of identity construction both in spatial and non-spatial disciplines, aiming to bridge between the chosen disciplines and architecture: and secondly, a methodological contribution, developing an interdisciplinary methodological framework for studying identity construction in multicultural urban spaces.

### 7.3 Discussion

The first exploratory study helped in understanding the participants' conceptions of place in contemporary context, which informed the overall discussion for this research, the second exploratory was instrumental in defining the methods and typology of spaces to be considered for the main case study. Some of the inferences of place and identity related experiences emerging from these exploratory studies linked to the main case study: these are the importance of sensory engagement and bodily engagement with the environments. Sensory engagement with places was discussed by the main case study participants in terms of visual and physical connectedness, and the tactile experiences embedded in their place experiences. Though bodily engagement was not explicitly referred to by the main case study participants in the ways this was observed in the second exploratory study (of the tram stop and Information Commons interaction space), it potentially links to the notions of need of physical comfort and spatial freedom that emerged as sub-themes of the place experiences from the main case study.

In the first stage of the main case study analysis IPA was used for analysing the interview transcripts: this allowed several sub-themes to emerge that defined the place and identity relationship based on the socio-cultural and spatial emphasis. The characteristic nature of any experiences in the physical world is embedded in both socio-cultural and spatial elements. As the research aims to understand the role of place in identity constructions in multicultural urban environments, the three-way categorisation of people's narratives—*more socio-cultural than spatial*, *equally socio-cultural and spatial*, and *more spatial than socio-cultural*—facilitated in examining the emphasis placed on the spatial aspects of the identity related experiences. One of the significant sub-theme identified through this categorisation was the notion of territoriality, which although a more socio-cultural factor showed how it can be experienced spatially and also be addressed through the spatial manifestation through varying degree of enclosures by physical design elements.

What is more important to note here is the potentially strong role of spatial elements which are linked to the dominant social-cultural aspects of identity construction and negotiation of people in urban environments. The socio-cultural and spatial relevance of the various themes suggested the significance of spatiality in understanding identity concepts in contemporary societies. As the sampling size of the research participants was small, the impact of multicultural spatial practices could not be entirely captured. However the study brought into focus the importance of boundaries and sense of territoriality which was clearly defined by the cultural background of the participants.

In the second stage, six identity motives proposed by Motivated Identity Construction Theory, which were originally based solely on the social aspects of individual and group identity, was spatially interpreted for this research. The sub-themes from the IPA analysis were particularly significant and useful to compare with the spatially interpreted identity motives. The analysis showed the prevalence of Distinctiveness, Meaning Belonging and Efficiency motive and Continuity and Self-esteem motive was hardly present in participant's narratives on identity related place experiences. The sub-themes helped in identifying some other motives which were categorised as Non-Categorical. These motives are especially important as they show the significance of place experiences in revealing multiple other socio-spatial factors such as inside-outsideness, spatial freedom, sense of enclosure, and territoriality that all influence and / or define identity construction /negotiation of people in contemporary urban environments.

The spatial reinterpretation of the identity motives also revealed the other non-categorical motives that are often neglected due to disciplinary boundaries of identity studies, and that require further investigation. For instance, the need for spatial freedom, which was identified as one of the motives, had significant influence in place engagement and this concept remains unexplored within the non-spatial disciplines. From the architecture and urban design perspective, the Efficiency motive was understood in terms of safety, physical comfort and functionality, which enabled the overall efficiency of a place. This also highlights how, when interpreted spatially, identity motives require a reassessment in terms of their meaning and relevance, suggesting that the motives explained by Motivated Identity Construction Theory in the contemporary urban context be reconceptualised. The main case study brought to light the significance of understanding identity from a socio-spatial perspectives by revealing other factors such the non-categorical motives and nature of place involvement related to identity experiences which remain elusive from a discipline-specific perspective. As the case study brings to light several other factors which influence identity construction, this research also provided empirical evidence for Distinctiveness, Efficiency, Meaning, and Belonging motives proposed by Motivated

Identity Construction Theory, proving the potential role of place in understanding identity in social psychology.

In the third stage of analysis the sub-themes were used to study the relationship between modes of place involvement and sense of identity. Relph’s seven modes of place involvement presents a rich domain to delve deeper into spatial understanding of identity experiences. The study of various modes of places involved offers interesting insights for understanding changing conceptions of people-place-identity relationships in contemporary urban living. Analysing the various levels of place involvement in individual participant’s narratives, it was observed that Empathetic Insideness (empathy with what the place is), Behavioural Insideness (place seen as a set of elements, views, landmarks) and Objective Outsideness (The place is like an object of study,

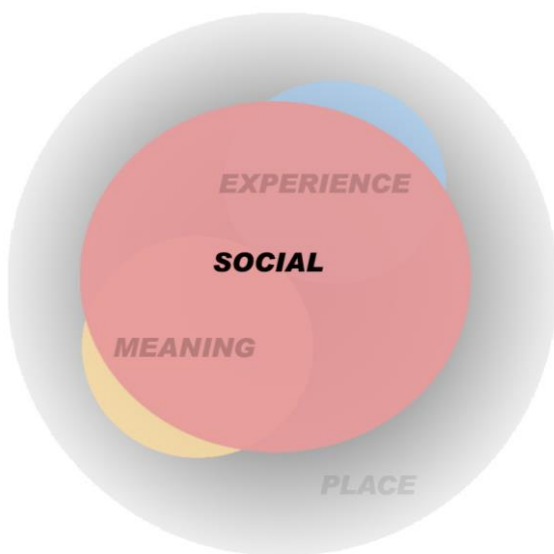


Figure 7.2 Social psychology and identity. (Source: Drawn by the author)



Figure 7.1 Human geography and identity. (Source: Drawn by the author)



Figure 7.3 Identified domain for understanding identity in this research. (Source: Drawn by the author)

experienced based on reason, surveyed scientifically and logically) was prevalent in identity-related place experiences, and the characteristic nature of these three levels relates with the notions of distinctiveness, belonging and efficiency, which were also highly prevalent and coexisted in some of the participant's narratives. It implies how distinctive experiences, visual quality, belonging and functionality of a place play an important role in developing a sense of identity with that place.

The main case study analysis showed the potential interrelationship of socio-spatial concepts with other disciplinary concepts for understanding identity construction. While in social psychology place remains a passive background and social factors occupy the dominant role within which meaning and experience are understood in comprehending identity concepts (see Fig 7.2), in contrast, in human geography place is considered as an active agent in studying peoples' place experiences but the interaction between meaning construction through socio-spatial practices remains less explored (see Fig 7.1). The research shows how several factors related to identity construction can be comprehended when the physical settings/place is drawn from the far background to understand the meanings of people's experiences of identity that are potentially relevant and significant to other discipline (Fig 7.3).

'Social' and 'place' is fused to form the main socio-spatial realm in which people create meaningful experience through places. This research explained how the three aspects: *place, meaning, and experience* interacting with one another is firmly embedded within the social-spatial realm (see Fig 7.4). The socio-spatial realm acts as a means to allow this interaction, which enables place-engagement and a sense of identity for people, and hence serves as a compelling domain for understanding identity constructions. The research examined the role of place in identity construction and brought to light the complexity of various layers in spatiality by looking into the domain of everyday spatial practices in multicultural urban environments. The everyday urban realm has been instrumental in developing rich narratives of participants' place experiences as it allowed me to capture and study in detail unconscious spatial behaviour and practices (bodily engagement, personal meanings, spontaneity, unconscious spatial choices) which are often overlooked in the study of place-identity relationships. The interdisciplinary approach in analysis facilitated in comprehending the complexities of contemporary urban spatial experiences.

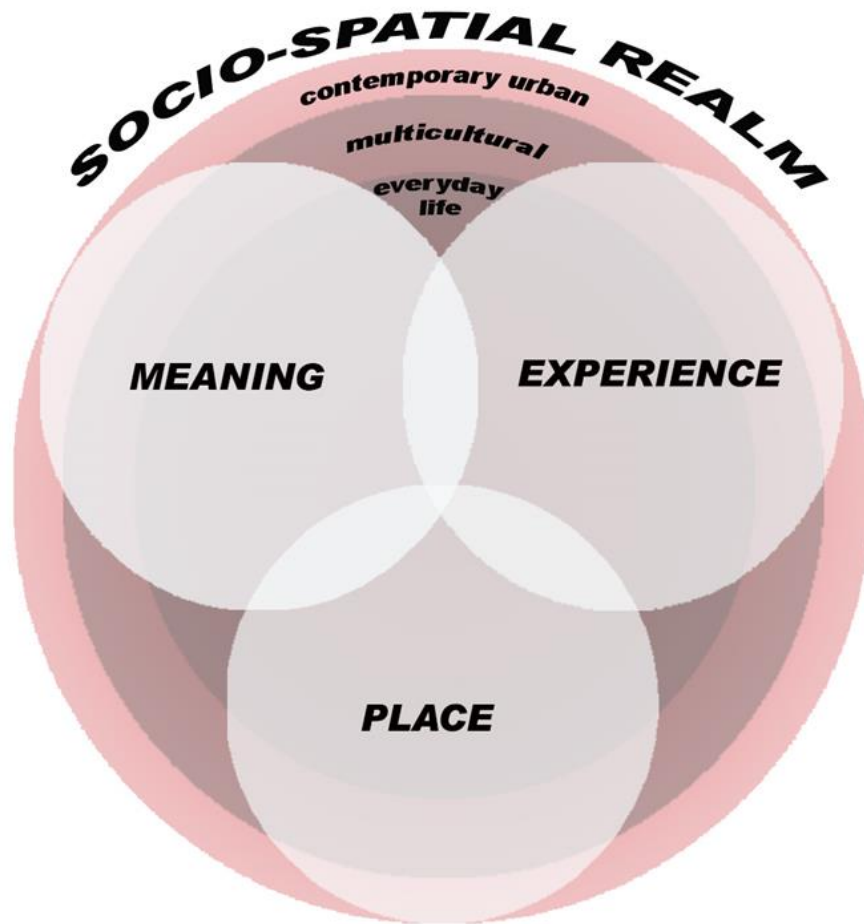


Figure 7.4 Identity and socio-spatial complexity. (Source: Drawn by the author)

Another crucial part of this research lies in both generating rich data and establishing an effective method to use the data to analyse and extract information to comprehend the identity constructions in contemporary urban environments. The challenge in research began with the means to capture the complexity of identity phenomenon, which is multi-layered and multi-dimensional, based on the diverse means of meaning construction through experiences with socio-spatial world. The concepts which immediately relate to the people and place relationship (from human geography), disciplines (social psychology and phenomenology) which though not immediately related can potentially offer significant insights for identity study, in this research were brought together as the main domain of study. The research employed diverse data collection methods (semi-structured interviews, sketching, photo elicitation, wordlist and image matching (see Fig 6.6) that facilitated in generating complex and rich data essential for understanding the various factors that influence and / or define identity construction.

The complex data consisted of several overlapping layers of people-place and identity relationships, and hence needed to be unpacked to be able to study the interrelationships

between the various factors involved in participants' place experiences that could offer valuable insights for this research. As discussed earlier in this section, the reach bringing to focus the three main aspects meaning, place and experience was used as a lens to analyse, filter and interpret the rich and complex data. The interdisciplinary framework acted as the lens that allowed the revelation of the significant relationships between socio-spatial aspects of identity construction.

The framework further helped in highlighting potential symbiotic relationships between the chosen disciplines, and enabled the development of significant interconnections within the data from the three disciplinary concepts which facilitated the move towards a more comprehensive socio-spatial understanding of identity construction in multi-cultural urban environment. The inferences from the main case study analysis and discussion are further synthesised and developed into original contributions which are presented in the following section.

#### **7.4 Contribution of the thesis**

The original contributions of this thesis are twofold: theoretical and methodological. The analysis and discussion of the main case study presented several themes, each of which had a different balance of socio-cultural and spatial relevance attached to them. Comparing and correlating the themes with the identity motives and various modes of place involvement, the research developed a set of socio-spatial propositions which are explicated below in section 6.5. The methodological contribution addresses the need for capturing the complexity of identity construction phenomena and its systematic disentanglement to explain the implicit and significant relationships within this, which is instrumental for understanding how significant interrelationships between spatial and social factors are established and what influence these have on how people identify with the urban environment.

#### **7.5 Theoretical and methodological problems in studying identity construction**

Erik Erikson explained the difficulty in probing the concept of identity as 'the more one writes about this subject, the more the word becomes a term for something as unfathomable as it is "all-pervasive"'.<sup>371</sup> Erickson's statement is particularly important in the present context where identity is increasingly fluid, contingent and changing over time, as opposed to the historical notions grounded in specificity.<sup>372</sup> It is important to consider identity as being both relational and contextual, which was developed in Erikson's works, such that identity is understood to always involve mutuality between the individual and his or her world. Erikson

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<sup>371</sup> Erik H Erikson, *Identity: youth and crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), 9.

<sup>372</sup> Woodward, *Understanding identit*, 32.

also suggests that there exists a whole range of systems that deal with the fundamental way in which the inner experience of the individual is linked to the structure in the outside world. Erikson's conception of identity opens up several trajectories for investigating the implicit factors influencing people's identity construction and negotiation in the dynamic contemporary urban context.

One major pitfall in the theoretical knowledge existing for studying identity construction is the fact that the spatiality of the context in core identity theories is rarely recognised. The context is more related to the term situation, where people's role-taking and role-making happens and where the spatiality becomes more a muted backdrop. Though it is accepted that one of the notable aspects of the definition of the situation that is neglected is the physical setting in which interaction takes place,<sup>373</sup> the spatial domain remains unexplored in identity studies due to limitations of non-spatial disciplines and the lack of interdisciplinary research in spatial disciplines. As Wendy Pullan explains, 'space structures and is structured by lived phenomenon, taking on the characteristics of a situation':<sup>374</sup> this emphasizes the inherent quality of mutual embeddedness of 'physicality' and 'situation', and hence asserts the significance of, and the need for, considering spatial aspects in studying identity constructions.

Identity has been studied both qualitatively and quantitatively: for instance, through life-story research ethnography, participatory theatre techniques, individual interviews, focus group interviews through analysis of a variety of texts, using discourse analysis and content analysis experiments and surveys using open-ended or closed-ended questions.<sup>375</sup> These study methodologies largely focus on gathering and analysing data pertaining to social categories, self-presentation, roles, relations which are essentially non-spatial. The very notion of considering spatiality in the study of peoples' identity construction demands the development of a methodology to overcome the limitations of the disciplinary boundaries so as to capture comprehensively the socio-spatial complexity of the identity phenomenon. This research addresses these theoretical and methodological lacunae in studying identity

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<sup>373</sup> John P. Hewitt, *Self and society: a symbolic interactionist social psychology* (Boston, Mass; London etc: Allyn and Bacon, 1976), 72.

<sup>374</sup> Wendy Pullan, "Spatial Discontinuities: Conflict Infrastructures in Contested Cities," in *Locating urban conflicts ethnicity, nationalism and the everyday*, ed. Britt Baillie and Wendy Pullan (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17–36, 18.

<sup>375</sup> Merete Monrad, "On a Scale of One to Five, Who Are You? Mixed Methods in Identity Research," *Acta Sociologica* 56, no. 4 (November 1, 2013): 347–60, 352.

construction from a socio-spatial perspective, and makes a contribution in both areas. These will be set out in more detail in the following sections.

## 7.6 Theoretical Contribution of the thesis

### **Socio-spatial propositions defining identity construction and negotiation in multicultural urban**

The main case study of this research explained the various themes that emerged from the participants' narratives on places which enabled identity construction. Comparing and correlating the emergent themes with the identity motives (from social psychology) and different levels of place involvement (from human geography), the following list of socio-spatial propositions were evolved to define identity construction and negotiation in multicultural urban spaces; **Boundaries, Restoration, Meaning, Distinctiveness, Belonging, Functionality and Safety**. Fig 7.5 illustrates the seven socio-spatial propositions developed as the research outcome, all of which are grounded in the socio-spatial realm that define the identity concepts in urban environments. Based on the interdisciplinary analysis, the propositions were developed from the identity motives. Some new propositions were developed from the non-categorical motives while others were based on the socio-spatial reassessment and reinterpretation of the identity motives formulated by Motivated Identity Construction Theory.

#### **7.6.1 Boundaries**

The needs for understanding and manifestations of boundaries in the physical environment are strongly linked to the way people identify with that environment. Woodward writes 'difference and sameness involve the marking of boundaries and the identity story is characterised by the moments at which boundaries are drawn, redrawn and transgressed and this is part of the dynamic of identity.'<sup>376</sup> The primacy of boundaries in architecture are generally well accepted, as for, 'architecturally, to define space literally meant to determine boundaries'<sup>377</sup> The analysis showed some interesting trajectories taken by boundaries which were manifested in participant's identity experience along a scale from being suggestive and implicit to an almost necessary and explicit need. Boundaries help in identifying a territory and defining individuals' spatial behaviour within that territory. Kim Dovey explains the importance of territories, which

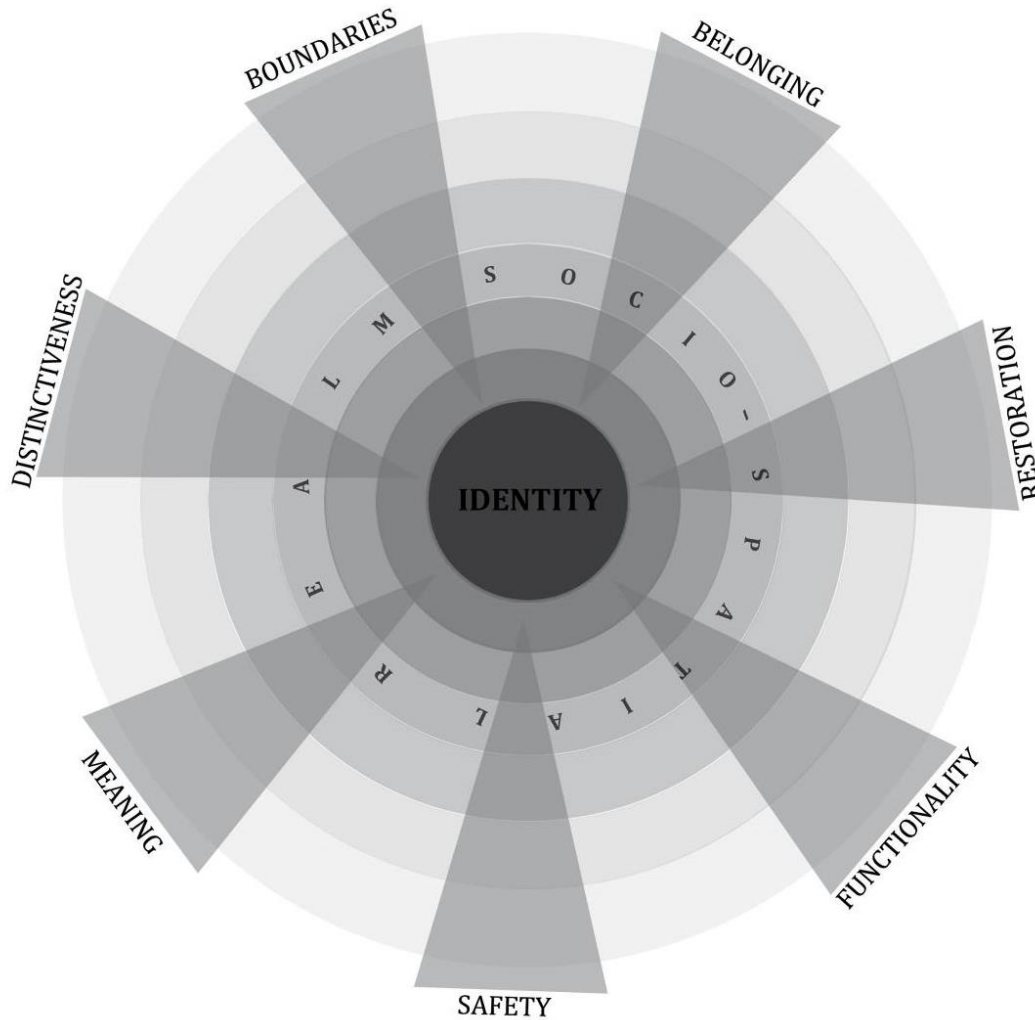
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<sup>376</sup> Woodward, *Understanding identity*, 167.

<sup>377</sup> Bernard Tschumi, "The Architectural Paradox," in *Architecture theory since 1968*, ed. K Michael Hays (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT, 1998), 219.



are particularly crucial in urban situations, as ‘largely people feel out of place when not aware of “how to act” in that particular place’.<sup>378</sup>



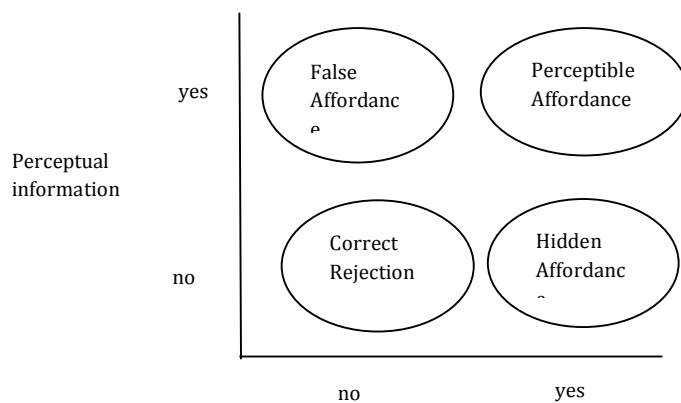
**Figure 7.5 Socio-spatial propositions defining identity constructions in multicultural urban environment.**(Source: Drawn by the author)

This become more pronounced in multicultural settings as the boundaries marking territories also act as a haven offering the socio-psychological comfort for different user groups. As in multicultural settings, aspects of boundary recognition bring an added layer of complexity as there are more chances of potential mis-recognition of boundaries due to particular cultural expectations with their concomitant spatial manifestations: where meanings and definition of boundaries

<sup>378</sup> Kim Dovey, *Becoming places : urbanism/architecture/identity/power* (London: Routledge, 2010), 32.

differ between cultures. However, careful study and understanding of boundaries become a potential means for enabling identity negotiation serving as a socio-cultural buffer particularly in a multicultural urban environment.

Boundaries defining territories for individuals and events not only clarify inside/outside and private/public relationships, but also offer significant cues for providing directions and/or communicating spatial constraints (personal/social) to the users. In discussions of identity experiences in personal and public domains, participants noted the need for clarity of territorial constructs in their spatial experiences. In other words, boundaries play a vital role in increasing affordances of urban space primarily in terms of the socio-psychological comfort which leads to the freedom to explore the urban environment resulting in better place engagement. William Gaver distinguished affordances based on the perceptual information as perceptible, hidden and false affordance. Understanding boundaries in these categories is particularly crucial for identity construction/negotiation of people in multi-cultural urban spaces, as it allows people to explore the opportunities and the flexibilities of territorial constructs any environment offers. Gaver explains that *perceptible affordances* exists when there is perceptual information available for an existing affordance (see Fig 7.6) and in case no information is available for an existing affordance, it is *hidden* and must be inferred from other evidence.



**Figure 7.6 Affordances categories according to available information.** (Source: William W., Gaver. 1991. "Technology Affordances." In Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '91). New Orleans.

If information suggests a nonexistent affordance; a *false* affordance exists upon which people may mistakenly try to act. Finally, people will usually not think of a given action when there is no affordance for it or any perceptual information suggesting it. The perceptible affordance of boundaries in urban space may offer a sense of clarity and comfort for appropriating specific spaces for user groups. Interestingly hidden affordances of boundaries while creating anxiety and insecurity in people spatial behaviour, it might also offer creative opportunities to explore and

evolving implicit boundaries in urban spaces. But when the affordances of boundaries are totally absent it discourages engagement with the environment and people and urban spaces remain disconnected: hence identity negotiation and/construction is impossible to initiate, as people do not relate to or engage with such environments. However it is again important to point out here that affordances might be absent through differing cultural perceptions/conditioning, rather than through spatial/physical lack in a particular setting, hence to reiterate the importance of understanding the layer of complexity of multicultural urban environment.

### **7.6.2 Restoration**

Korpela et al. defined restoration as a process of recovery that follows stress or fatigue, involving an enhancement of mood, a renewed capacity for directed attention, and possible self-reflection.<sup>379</sup> Contemporary urban living is often characterised by speed, a sense of alienation and displacement, leading to an increasingly fragile relationship between people and place. Hence people tend to seek restorative qualities in places that enable them to reconstitute their self and identity and develop a sense of attachment to the physical world. Spatial experiences that offer personal and social restoration are considered to be an important factor that enables people to identify with places, hence Restoration is one of the propositions identified in this research which define identity construction/negotiation. Restorative environments make the place compatible to one's preference, hence it enables a sense of identity by being favourable for engaging and connecting with such a place in the contemporary urban environment

Restorative experiences fall under the characteristic nature of peak experiences which is the 'integrated feeling, spontaneity, creative, ease of functioning, positive etc'<sup>380</sup> as described by Maslow, and discussed as the most appropriate situation for evoking a strong sense of identity in a person. In such experiences, Maslow explained that people feel more integrated in many ways and feel a sense of complete relaxation. The research demonstrated the restorative quality of a place which occurred in various ways such as inside-outside connectedness, or landscaping elements allowing people to associate with nature. In addition some spatial tactics were also adopted to overcome the stressful and complex urban condition: places that allow pause and moments of reflection and contemplation, and experiences associated with such places of restoration, facilitate the interaction with one's self so as to reconstitute or restructure one's identity. Contemporary urban living has reified machine times where people have 'lost touch with

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<sup>379</sup> Kalevi M. Korpela and Terry Hartig, "Restorative Experience and Self-Regulation in Favorite Places," *Environment and Behavior* 33, no. 4 (July 1, 2001): 572–89, doi:10.1177/00139160121973133.

<sup>380</sup> Maslow, "Peak-Experiences as Acute Identity-Experience," 278.

other rhythms and with the multiple times of our existence'<sup>381</sup>. This has had a great impact on our perception of reality which needs to be 'constantly re-activated and re-created in the present'.<sup>382</sup> Activity and rest alterations, cyclic exchanges and transformations, seasonal and diurnal sensitivity, all form the subtle rhythm of life which sustains the pulse of our being.<sup>383</sup> Experiencing the rhythmic nature of time can offer valuable cues that synchronise people with their environment. Although there was not any particular restorative experiences preferred by participants based on their diverse cultural backgrounds, it should also be noted that more focused and deeper study with a larger group of participants may potentially reveal interesting manifestations of cultural connotations in restorative experiences. Restoration, presented as one of the propositions for identity construction in this research, is a direct result of including place in understanding identity, which once again implies the significant role of place in comprehending the identity concepts .

### ***7.6.3 Meaning***

One of the broad definitions of meaning is something that generates perception and is associated with an individual's internal psychological and social processes.<sup>384</sup> This research indicated that people identify themselves with urban environments that enable meaningful experience, though they are similar to the restorative experiences in places but are different in terms of providing a sense of purpose and personal meaning being associated with some places. Since the affective perception is generated from the psychological process (meanings and attachments) rooted in the setting, the identity of place is determined not only by the physical components but also the meanings and associations developed between people and places. Meaning may be generated by various factors but broadly this research indicates that personal meanings are attached to places associated with people's everyday life, work, memories, sense of restoration and home, whereas religious places, and urban spaces with social activities and interaction, foster social meanings. While personal meaning attached to places, as mentioned earlier, is based on individual experiences which may be diverse for different people, social meaning are often derived based on the cultural background and conditioning of individual and groups.

Meanings may be derived not only through the physical elements in the urban environments, but also from symbolic elements. Meanings are created through 'social production' and 'social construction'. Setha Low defines social production as the processes which initially creates the

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<sup>381</sup> Barbara Adam, *Timewatch : the social analysis of time* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 42.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>384</sup> Stedman, "Is It Really Just a Social Construction?"

material space combining social, economic, ideological, and technological factors followed by the social construction of spaces which enables the experiences of space which allows people's social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting, transforming it and giving it meaning.<sup>385</sup> Both these processes enrich the spatially embedded meanings and effectively reduce the distanced relationship with the physical environment, allowing people to develop deeper relationships with the environment, and serving to anchor people to places.

#### ***7.6.4 Distinctiveness***

Distinctiveness is the quality or state of being different, and according to this research urban spaces that offer distinctive experiences are considered to be special compared to other spaces. It was also observed in the case study analysis that such spaces were potentially significant for developing a sense of identity, as people were more attracted and eager to be part of such experiences. Distinctiveness in urban spaces, similarly to 'meaning' discussed above, can be manifest through socio-cultural, spatial, visual and symbolic elements in the environment. Distinctive spatial experiences can serve to balance the routine, mundane and homogeneous nature of much of the contemporary urban environment. Distinctiveness can be perceived and experienced through the uniqueness of spatial elements; for instance, the historicity of the building elements, the simplicity of the spatial planning and design to enrich experience, an interesting juxtaposition of activity spaces, and so on.

Contextual experiences that are distinctive offer valuable cues for locating and orienting oneself with the place and serve as points of reference. Such urban environments allow people to confidently manoeuvre through, engage with, and gradually develop a sense of identity with the environment. Distinctiveness can be effectively seen as a pull factor in the contemporary urban context to encourage people to initiate the process of place engagement which might eventually enable people to develop a sense of attachment for the characteristic nature of the urban spaces. Apart from enabling orientation and identity, distinctive urban space experience without dominant socio-cultural connotations can provide a platform to bring a diversity of people together. Developing urban spaces that could nurture distinctive experiences through spatial elements (as in this research indicated by participants; the historic gate to western park, shopping streets in the city centre etc) encourages diverse people to interact with urban spaces, opening up more opportunities for negotiating and constructing identity in a multicultural urban environment.

#### ***7.6.5 Belonging***

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<sup>385</sup> Setha M Low, *On the plaza: the politics of public space and culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 123.

A sense of belonging creates a deeper and reciprocal relationship with places, where people identify themselves with the place and the place in turn reinforces their identity. Apart from the socio-cultural factors that play a crucial role in belonging to a place, the research case study indicated that familiarity and comfort with a place are also some of the factors that enable the sense of belonging to a place. The notions of being connected (whether through spatial or visual experiences) with the place as a part of one's everyday life also allowed participants to initiate the sense of belonging in the urban environment.

Belonging is also developed when urban spaces allow for spatial reinterpretations for people from diverse cultural backgrounds, enabling cultural meanings to be negotiated and evolved with which they can each identify themselves. Given the dynamic changes in urban environments and the rapid pace of contemporary living, to belong to a place can be a challenging concept. Places today are largely designed for promoting themselves as attractions, which has transformed everyday experiences into a journey that Baudrillard terms "hyperreality".<sup>386</sup> Amidst these hyperreal experiences, it is those 'nameless', 'insignificant' spaces, devoid of technological transformations and which retain that quality of place that allow people to enact the spatial tactics which they adopt to find meaning in their everyday practices. It is that 'quality without name'<sup>387</sup> that Christopher Alexander describes metaphorically with the words 'alive', 'whole', 'comfortable', 'free', 'exact' and 'eternal'. Each of these words is explained by Alexander with an attempt to grasp the true essence of that *quality without name* experienced in places. Yet the more one tries to grasp the meaning with these words 'it confuses more than it explains'.<sup>388</sup> The relevant part of Alexander's work in the present context is where he summarises how the quality that has profound depth and richness is 'so ordinary as well'.<sup>389</sup>

It is exactly these ordinary places, and our everyday performativity in them, which is also reciprocal in the sense of allowing one to extend one's self to identify in that place and in turn reassuring, reinforcing or restructuring one's identity with the place itself, that nurtures the human self, anchoring and securing them to the physical world. On the other hand, interestingly, places in the present urban context can also evoke a sense of belonging whose underlying characteristics and nature can be linked to Anne-Marie Fortier's observation of how certain nomadic groups, through ritualised repetition of symbolic acts and stylised practices, tend to

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<sup>386</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 149.

<sup>387</sup> Christopher Alexander, *The timeless way of building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 17.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid*, 38.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

reinscribe themselves into a space.<sup>390</sup> The comparison that is crucial here is the urban setting which accommodates these repetitive practices, which can also be seen as a spatial tactic of people to develop a sense of identity with the environment. With the multicultural nature of the urban environment, individuals and groups may tend to follow specific spatial practices—for instance, developing a preferred route to visit/reach a place, appropriating specific places—all of which possess and enhance their own social meanings. Hence urban spaces providing opportunities for various spatial tactics create a favourable environment for developing a sense of identity.

### **7.6.6 Functionality**

The functional capacity of an urban environment is observed as an important factor for people to feel attracted to the place and identify with it. The functional efficiency of places is regarded as an essential characteristic of urban spatial experiences. The research case study indicated that people preferred places that ease the complexity of urban activities. The relationship between people and place is more of a necessity which gradually becomes part of their lifestyle. Flexibility and multiple-use of urban spaces manifests the ability of the environment to be efficient when engaged with by different people.

Functionally effective places can also offer clarity in circulation which creates a sense of comfort. Functionality also brings back to this discussion the affordances of urban space in making the capable use of the space perceivable. Not only visual cues, but also other sensory perception of touch and sound can increase the affordance of function in urban spaces. This fosters confidence in a person to understand the place. Though Functionality individually may or may not be crucial to the identity construction of people with places, it is most important in combination with other socio-spatial themes allowing people to connect to the environment more strongly. For instance, as one of the participants referred to a space in Western park (refer Fig 6.6 ) which though is functionally good for viewing the water body, the spatial characteristics of experience do not allow for spontaneity, and psychological comfort which makes passive recreation seem to have failed: hence the participant did not get an opportunity to engage with the place itself.

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<sup>390</sup> Fortier Anne-Marie, "Re-membering Places and the Performance of Belonging(s)," in *Performativity and Belonging*, ed. Vikki Bell (London: Sage, 1992), 42.

### *7.6.7 Safety*

Physical safety is considered as a default requirement in the urban environment for people to enable any form of interaction and connectedness with them. Safe urban spaces allow people to explore them and help in gradually developing a sense of familiarity and comfort with that environment. Safety for pedestrians is an important factor initiating the process of place engagement, as it reduces feeling of being conscious of the safety factor and fosters spontaneity in activities and movement. As in Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, safety assurance of a place is considered as a prerequisite for other higher-order experiences of identifying one's self with that place. A safer environment also allows people to be more flexible, and offers them the confidence to creatively use or negotiate urban spaces. Safer places enable people to develop a relationship of trust with them, to become more connected with that environment. Physical safety also implicitly offers psychological comfort and freedom in a multicultural environment and fosters healthy social engagement.

The above set of propositions was developed by comparing the themes that emerged from the case study analysis and comparing them with the identity motives and different place involvement categories developed from section 6.2.4. The main implication of these propositions is that they have the potential to extend and refine theories on identity construction in various spatial and non-spatial disciplines. As it had already shown by adopting socio-spatial approach to understand identity this research has introduced propositions such as Boundaries, Restoration, Functionality and Safety which can be potentially studied more deeply as being identity motives in social psychology. Further Distinctiveness, Meaning and Belonging propositions clearly evidence a part of the Motivated Identity Construction Theory. Identifying the role of spatial intervention into identity, this research has introduced concepts of Restoration, Safety, and Boundaries. Functionality is more a replacement for 'Efficiency', as the former was more explicitly discussed and related to identity construction in the participants' narratives. Meaning and Distinctiveness have been reconceptualised from the perspective of socio-spatial experiences of identity construction, highlighting the importance of spatial dimensions attached to both the terms. These propositions, when more specific and re-interpreted spatially, can be transposed as valuable design guidelines for multicultural urban spaces which is a potential trajectory for further research.

The socio-spatial propositions serve to develop a sense of identity enabled through positive/constructive interaction with the context. It is important to emphasise that the



discussion of identity constructed or negotiated in this research needs to be understood from the relational identity perspective explained in the introduction chapter. These propositions serve as essential aspects of place experience which initiate the process of interaction with urban space and define identity constructions in the urban environment today. Interaction and engagement with physical environments is one of the potential means for developing identity with a place, which is instrumental for a transactional relationship between people and place

These propositions not only define identity constructions but also can also be viewed as socio-spatial motives for developing place attachment. Scopelliti and Tiberio define place attachment as 'a complex construct that accounts for a person's affective bonds to place'.<sup>391</sup> Altman and Low's explanation of place attachment includes affective, cognitive, and behavioural bonds between individuals or groups and a place.<sup>392</sup> Place attachment consists of an attachment to the social features of the place facilitating social interactions, relationships, and group identity, but also an attachment to the physical features of the place and the meanings they represent.<sup>393</sup> These formative experiences, as well as restorative experiences available in such places, can lead one to identify with and become attached to them. The propositions also throw light on the crucial role of place in offering multiple, different forms of identification and attachment depending both on user group: for instance in this research it was shown how for a multicultural user group the spatial understandings and experiences differ, and these propositions help in facilitating the place to cater to these diverse needs of differing user groups. As mentioned earlier in section 7.3, one of the limitations of this research lies in the small sampling number of 15 international students which is not enough to derive and syntheses the difference in spatial negotiations of identity construction of individual or group identities of diverse cultural background of people. Nevertheless the case studies throws light on some of the cultural bias, influences and impacts of people in engaging in urban spaces, for instance, their sense of territoriality, user group comfort, developing social meanings based on their religion and native place experiences.

These socio-spatial propositions enable identity construction and negotiation by encouraging people engagement, which is one of the crucial factors that needs to be considered in spatial design thinking in contemporary cities: researchers in urban studies explain that "placelessness" associated with modern cities is merely a reflection of people's inexperience with new places'.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Massimiliano Scopelliti and Lorenza Tiberio, "Homesickness in University Students: The Role of Multiple Place Attachment," *Environment and Behavior* 42, no. 3 (May 1, 2010): 335–50, 337.

<sup>392</sup> Irwin Altman and Setha M Low, *Place Attachment* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 1992).

<sup>393</sup> Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, "Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organizing Framework," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no. 1 (March 2010): 1–10, doi:10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.09.006.

<sup>394</sup> Richard Dennis, *Cities in modernity: representations and productions of metropolitan space, 1840-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

The theoretical contribution brings to light the role of place in understanding identity and addresses the research questions effectively, explaining the various factors of contemporary spatial experiences that define identity constructions, and also shows how the socio-spatial implication has an impact upon the very notion of identity construction in contemporary multi-cultural urban contexts.

## **7.7 Methodological Contribution**

### ***Interdisciplinary methodological framework for studying identity construction in multi-cultural urban spaces***

The research developed an interdisciplinary methodology to study the complex phenomena of identity construction in urban spaces. The methodology was established to disentangle the socio-spatial factors that define, determine, and influence identity construction and negotiation. As discussed earlier in section 6.5, one of the methodological problems in identity studies is the lack of a framework that can embrace and support analysis of the implications of the relationships between people, place and experience. The methodology developed here involves four stages, illustrated in Fig 7.7. These are:

- Identifying the related domain
- Generating rich and complex data
- Triadic lens for analysis
- Systematic layering and identifying patterns/interconnections

The four stages of this methodology operate as follows:

[I] Identifying the related domain:

In the first stage, the various aspects/topics related to identity studies are identified depending on the nature of research question. In this study, as it involved the spatial experiences in multicultural urban spaces, the three sub-domains of study were people, place and experience. The identified higher-level domain includes clearly interrelated factors as well as potential significant factors but not explicitly related. In Fig 6.7 (I) is illustrated as lines that intersect represented closely related disciplines and other lines that are closer to the intersecting lines represent subjects and disciplines that are potentially important for offering new insights for the research. This allows the researcher to think beyond the disciplinary boundaries in the initial phase of the study.

## [II] Generating rich and complex data

Considering the different sub-domains and bringing them together for studying the complex phenomenon of identity construction creates complex data. These data can be become potentially significant or rendered useless depending on the way they are made to interact or by creating means in which they can be made to interact. This is crucial for extracting insightful information in the analysis stage. Hence the various aspects of the study which need to be explored are brought together in the form of complex and rich data. This is achieved by using diverse data collection methods to capture the phenomenon of identity construction with reference to peoples' socio-spatial experiences in the contemporary context. The methods bring together multifarious forms of data: visual, textual, and audio (including photo-elicitation, sketching, in-depth interview, ranking images, image-wordlist matching). This second stage deliberately creates complex and rich data to capture the overlapping relationships of people, place and experience.

## [III] Triadic lens for analysis

This is one of the critical phase of the methodology, as the analytical framework needs to disentangle the complexity if it is to be able to identify the crucial interconnections and relationships between various factors of people's place experiences and identity constructions. To achieve this, an interdisciplinary framework is developed from significant concepts from the sub-domains of this research, which serve as an analytical sieve to disentangle the complexity generated in the previous stage. The analytical sieve is in the form of a triadic interdisciplinary lens of experience, place and meaning, and is developed by comparing the socio-spatial themes (see Table 5.2) , the identity motives and modes of place experiences which allows the implicit interrelationships between people, place and identity to emerge and be carried forward to the next stage.

## [IV] Systematic layering and identifying patterns/interconnections

The interdisciplinary framework of analysis facilitates in systematically layering the complex data into categories and themes enabling the identify of points of intersections between various implicit factors, and also the resultant pattern emerging from their interconnectedness. Some of the emerging patterns can further be studied from discipline-specific or interdisciplinary perspectives: for instance, the research here indicated how the modes of place experience concepts in human geography could be revisited and reinterpreted for contemporary place experiences (see section 7.5).

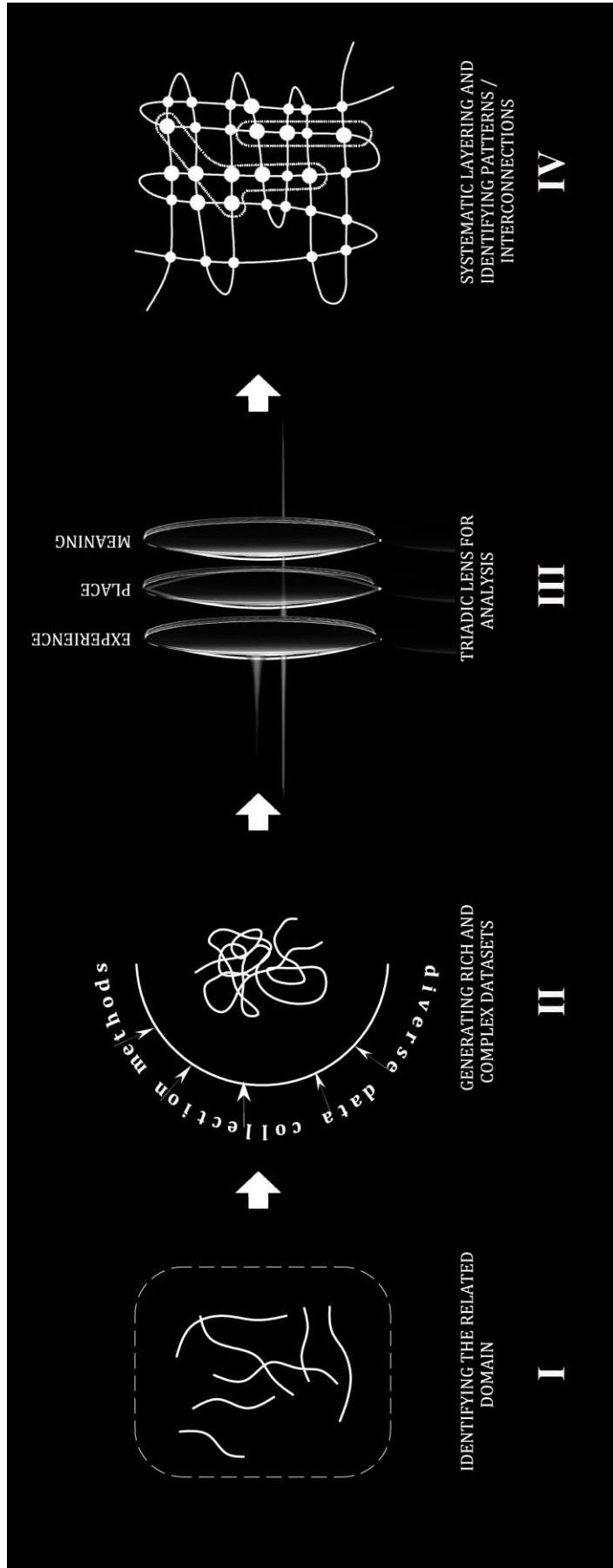


Figure 7.7 An interdisciplinary framework for studying identity constructions

### 7.7.1 Significance of the framework

The interdisciplinary framework allows the development of a 'thick description', a term proposed by Clifford Geertz to describe an approach that places emphasis on the seeking out of multiple perspectives, and which strives to demonstrate the richness of what is happening in the complex process of identity in relation to people's experience and understanding of urban spaces.<sup>395</sup> Bringing together the three main aspects of *place, experience and meaning*, this framework offers multiple perspectives which are potentially significant for their ability to extract valuable insights from the various complex datasets collected in this research. The triadic lens of place, meaning and experience introduced in the third stage of the methodology (see Fig 7.7 ) allows the framework to extend and/or deepen the qualitative enquiry on socio-spatial aspects of identity. This framework of analysis related place experiences and identity from diverse disciplines, allowing emerging interrelationships of several factors— for instance, how identity motives are linked to socio-cultural and spatial aspects, and how these in turn can be co-related to changing conceptions of place involvement and experiences. This framework, while revealing implicit connections, facilitates in building these connections to develop a model for identity construction related to place experiences in their contemporary context. Apart from expanding the methodological choice for studying identity, the framework extends the approach of people and place relationships by blurring disciplinary boundaries. Hernandez et al. analytical reviewing of literature on place meaning and attachment points out the need for studies in this domain to 'progress from analysing what and how much to analysing questions such as how, where, when and why'.<sup>396</sup> The framework developed here creates opportunities for these questions to be addressed through the rich interdisciplinary concepts, creating valuable interrelationship of various implicit factors involved in place experiences.

The methodology emphasises the significance of both generating rich data and devising an effective framework to analyse the complexity of identity constructions and urban space experiences. The interdisciplinary framework enabled the creation of meaningful data that allow the significant relationship between people-place-identity to be revealed. The framework offers an interdisciplinary approach to enable significant interconnections between diverse data from the three disciplinary concepts to develop, which in turn facilitated a more comprehensive socio-spatial understanding of identity construction in multi-cultural urban environments. The methodology links intrinsically to the findings, facilitates repeatability and transferability of the findings to other similar cases and contexts. The visualisation of the methodology also enables

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<sup>395</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (Basic Books, 1973).

<sup>396</sup> Hernandez, Hidalgo, and Ruiz, "Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Research on Place Attachment." 128.

the simplified version of the multistage data analysis and synthesis in the research process to offer more clarity while adapting to different case study places.

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical and methodological contributions of this research which was synthesised from the main case study inferences. The theoretical contribution expanded the understanding of identity constructions from a socio-spatial perspective, which resulted in renewed understanding of some of the aspects of identity motives formulated in social psychology. The socio-spatial proposition presented also introduced themes that define identity constructions in urban context; Restoration, Safety, Boundaries. As a methodological contribution, addressing the methodological problems in identity studies, an interdisciplinary framework developed to untangle and comprehend the complexity of various factors involved in studying identity in multi-cultural urban environments. These propositions explain how the notions of identity have been redefined based on contemporary spatial experiences, and also highlight the socio-spatial implications on identity today, addressing both the research questions effectively.

The research findings throw light on the significant role of physical settings in contemporary urban context enabling people to negotiate their sense of identity in everyday spatial behaviours. In the present day spatial complexities and the rapid pace of urban living, a careful design of physical settings provides potential opportunities for meaningful place engagement. The socio-spatial propositions highlighted the role of spatiality in constructing/ negotiating people's identity but more importantly offers valuable cues for architectural designers in exploring the spatial manifestations of these propositions to facilitate place engagement. The research emphasizes the need for architects to understand more deeply the various explicit and implicit ways in which people's spatial practices are defined by the design of the built environment in identity construction.

The research case studies showed how in the process of engaging with a place, the architectural design of the physical settings impacts/influences people's spatial behaviour both consciously and unconsciously at various levels of place engagement. For instance, the second exploratory study showed how people appropriate places through bodily engagement was clearly defined and /or was made possible by the design elements of that place such as the railings, the platform, steps. This shows that how these design elements operating at a very small level of the overall architectural design thinking allowed people to initiate the process of engaging with the place, which is an essential step for developing a sense of identity with the environment. At a more

complex level of social, cultural and psychological comfort, the research shows how the careful and meaningful architectural interventions and thinking can support and facilitate spatial tactics of people from diverse backgrounds to negotiate their sense of identity and belonging to a place .

While the multi-layered characteristics (multiculturalism, everyday urban space, incidental space) of the research context created limitations to the present work, they also indicate a potential trajectory for further research which would undertake a comparative study of other cities to validate, contradict or extend the research findings. The methodological contribution explains how the multi-dimensional nature of identity phenomenon addressed from the rarely attempted socio-spatial perspective allows the blurring of boundaries between the spatial and non-spatial disciplines, and highlights the significance of a symbiotic relationship between them which is crucial for a holistic understanding of identity concepts in contemporary urban contexts.

### **7.9 Limitations of the research**

The very complexity of this research topic, identity in multicultural contexts, poses several difficulties and challenges in conducting the study. The broad range of epistemological approaches available to researchers working in identity studies today means that it is possible to reflect upon and question the appropriateness of the framework within which one's research is located *vis-à-vis* other frameworks. The thesis draws upon both qualitative approaches to identity construction and employs Interpretivism, a rich insider's approach to the data that provides insights into peoples' experiences. Nonetheless, the present research does feature some potential limitations in relation to the research design which are outlined and discussed in this section.

Given the constraints on resources and complexity of data, though it was deemed advantageous to limit the sample of participants to 15 student participants' from six countries (China, Thailand, Romania, Nigeria, Iran, and Holland), it clearly is a limitation to delve into the large issues of multiculturalism and present more specific examples which manifested the impact of cultural background of the people in identity construction or negotiation process. However an increased number of participants and greater diversity of nationalities would make further empirical and theoretical contributions to the research topic. Chapter 5 explained in detail my positionality in this research: being an international student I was able to understand the participants' response from the insider's perspective, although this also brought certain preconceptions and bias while interpreting participants' responses. I have addressed this issue as far as reasonable by providing the transparency of data interpretation, detailing the assumptions that guided the analysis. The research aimed to study identity construction in multi-cultural environments for which the selection of Sheffield as a case study was justified in terms of the data describing the percentage

and diversity of its international student population compared to other cities in UK. Though the multicultural diversity of the case study was justified, the spatial features and characteristics of each and every city would have an impact on the ways in which people interact with the spaces, which make the data analysed here very context-specific. However this limitation can be considered as potential direction for further research.

### **7.10 Further research directions**

The richness and the complexity of this research domain 'people-place-identity' relationships in this contemporary urban environments opens up several trajectories for research and investigation. As mentioned earlier, one of the main contributions of this research is that its theoretical and methodological findings facilitate in refining existing theories on identity. On the theoretical level, the findings of the study can be used for understanding and reconceptualising the existing identity theories in different disciplines: for instance, some of the motives proposed by Identity Motivation Theory in social psychology can possibly require reinterpretation when approached from a socio-spatial perspective.

The higher order of the socio-spatial preposition suggested allows for further research into each of them for more specific spatial interpretations which can fruitfully link with the some of the existing urban design guidelines. Some the works undertaken by architects and urban designers have resulted in developing framework/guidelines good urban design, place making etc. such framework and guidelines can be potentially revisited and reinterpreted to understand more in depth how they facilitate in actually enabling people and place interaction which is fundamental for identity construction/negotiation. As the strength of the suggested socio-spatial prepositions lies in derivation from rich interdisciplinary approach and the empirical data that explains how people and place interact and identities are negotiated. This can be instrumental for studying and understanding the reasons why and how some these existing guidelines can be successfully implemented especially for an integrated urban design development in multicultural cities.

the multiple overlapping factors involving the social and cultural conditioning of the people from diverse ethnic background is definitely one the areas which requires further research, as it was clearly reflected in this research how a Female Dutch participant's needs and priorities were more related to the sense of orientation in the urban environment and Iranian female participant needs were more pertaining to the psychological comfort and privacy .Other parameters that needs to be studied which can offer more insights into the way people negotiate their sense of identity :for instance: participants belonging to a specific age group ( youth, adult etc.) and phase



of life ( working, unemployed, previous personal experiences of travelling) can impact the way they interact, adapt, negotiate and/or engage with the environment.

Different multicultural cities could also be studied using the same interdisciplinary framework of analysis to understand how the specific spatial characteristics of a city might have an impact on people's identity construction, and furthermore, the emergent themes from this proposed work could be comparatively studied with the research presented here.

Finally, the various socio-spatial propositions suggested in this research would benefit from deeper exploration as spatial re-interpretations that can be developed into urban design guidelines that would support the enhancement of people's emplacement in contemporary cities.

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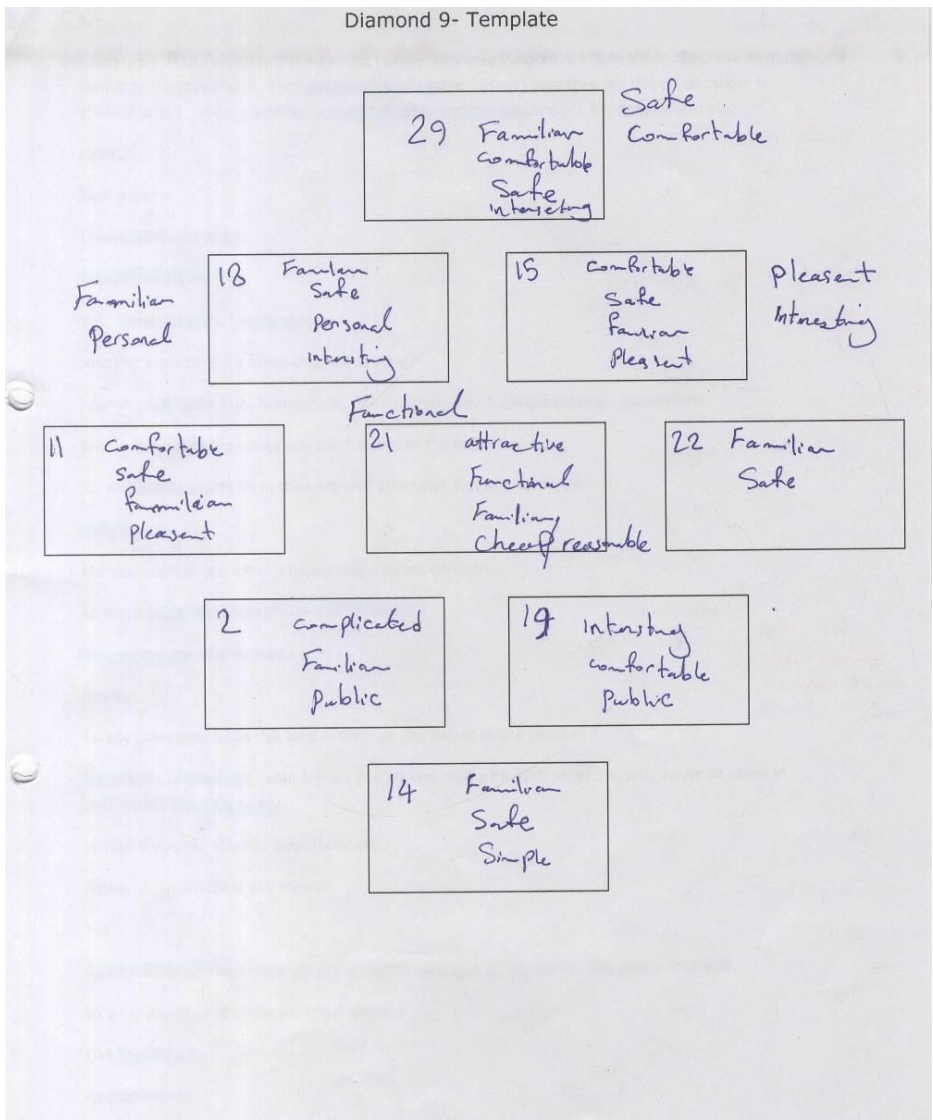
# Appendix I

## Interview Transcripts

### Participant 1

P1	IRANIAN
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### Diamond ranking





### **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Can you explain something on your ranking of the images?*

*Hmmm...I usually pass through this way... actually I prefer this area I should not rank it last... As it was quite similar to the one above... I feel safe and comfortable... when I pass through this place, there is student union shop which I can see and it is familiar and of course it near the arts tower which is my department*

*Okay.*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*I prefer a corner space for myself...*

*More like an enclosure?*

*Yes a bit personal with some seating area*

*Is this enclosure like a fence or just a seating you are demarcating?*

*Hmmm.. not a fence but more like a corner space in a park with some seating*

*What about the spaces or activities you want to see?*

*So you only want a corner space?*

*yes yes... I do not want to be the centre of attention, just a corner space for myself.*

*you want to see what is happening around?*

*yes yes of course I want see what's happening around..*

*So more being an observer and less observed..?*

*Yes exactly...Thank you... (smile)*

*So any place which has this kind of physical setting you would relate yourself?*

*It depends If I am alone, I will not be comfortable but if I am with my friends yes then I would sit and chat in this such a place. But just by myself never I will sit alone in the park.*

*In case if you are alone?...*

*Do you mean alone in Sheffield?*

*Yes.*

*Apart from shopping I have never gone alone anywhere... In case if I go again I would prefer a corner place.. Not being observed by people...*

*So what about. .if it's your personal space..?*

*Similar to my officespace you mean?*

*it's your choice.*

*Okay..*

*hmmm.. It should be quite... If its personal nobody should interrupts*

*okay.. and the what else?*

*Again I prefer personal room for myself as I'm a Muslim I need to do my prayers so I cannot share my room with others...*

*Okay. you mean to say it's difficult for you to share a place.. ?*

*Only for prayer I cannot share as there is no common prayer room here. Its only for that otherwise I don't mind sharing.*

*Let's assume if you have a common prayer hall then apart from that what else you would want in your space..?*

*It has to be quite.. Of course it should be safe and if you would talk about my work area.. It should be like here... More PhD students sitting and discussing one feels a sense of more attachment especially with more international students.*

*What about the physical aspect ?.*

*Of course what I see outside from my place is very important.*

*And if you do not have any windows ?..*

*I would add more objects related to my native place.*

*But you don't any such objects have in your office now?*

*At the moment i don't have.. Hmmm. I dint bring...We have lots of Iranian friends here... So i don't feel out of place...so I don't feel I'm alone..*

#### **TASK 5 DISCUSSION**

*In town hall there is a lack of benches and seating area*

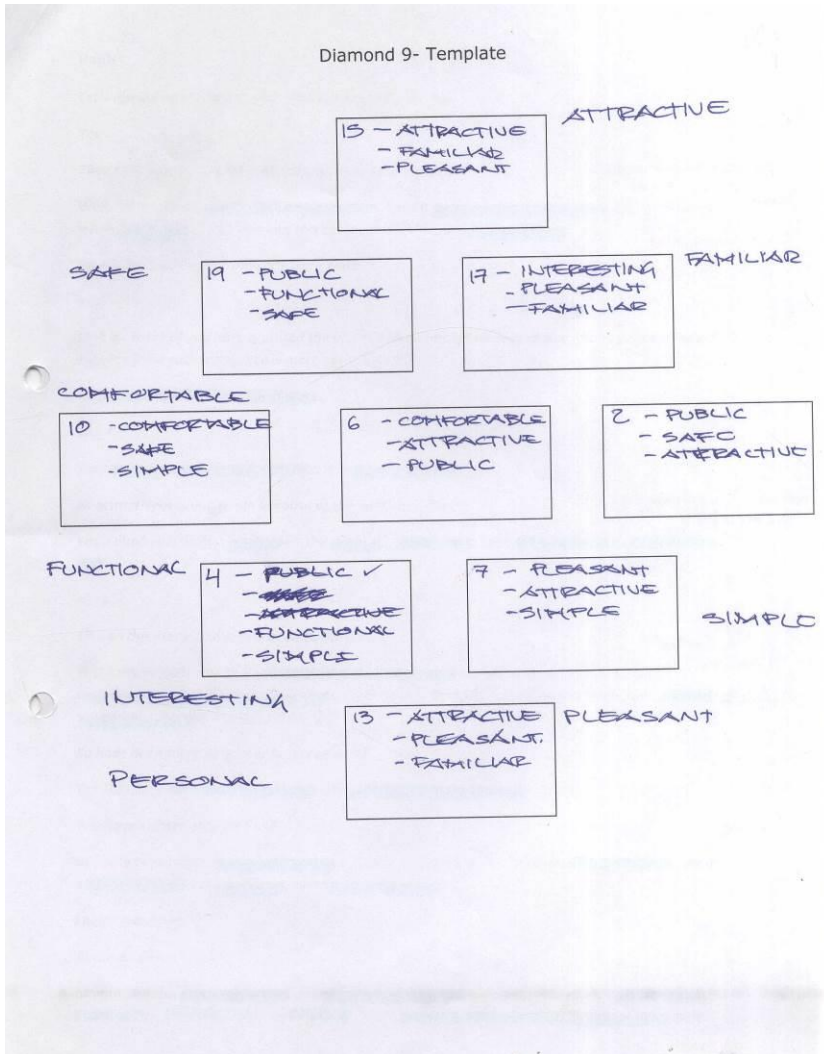
*There are benches..*

*In this place there are benches, but it's always occupied full or there is no privacy here. I prefer that more. For example I do not use the bus stop because no seating there also, it feels like people are always watching so I prefer some benches in the corner.*

Participant 2

P2	Mexican
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Diamond ranking



## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Let's discuss on the image your have ranked to be on top...*

*Yes.*

*That's 15.. Could you please explain your reasons for how identify with this place and why you ranked it highest?*

*I see this (park) everyday from my window sometimes, when I'm so tired I just look into this space...the bridge... and its pleasant too*

*Is it also because you have visited and experienced this place that you have ranked this place high?*

*No, I think it's more because I see this place every day from place where I work, where I spend more time.*

*Okay.*

*It's a kind of relaxing space for me though it is far away but it is..I don't know exactly what is the reason. .but it's very attractive due it's the relaxing environment with children playing around, the whole surrounding is nice*

*okay..*

*Ok what about image no 19,have you been to the place?*

*Yes. In Sheffield, there are not many open public spaces. We do have parks but those are without specific places for socialising and interaction spaces.. Though I don't like socialising too much but I like to see people gathering in some place and the activities*

*So have you been there with your family as well?*

*Yes... It's basically because of my children I like this place, they like to play in the fountain..*

*You have written safe for this?*

*As it's not an isolated place. Hmmm... this place is offers that sense of safety especially when I am with my family that becomes very important. There are lots of people and activities. Overall it's a nice place...*

*Lets discuss now some lower ranked images, do you have anything to say on Image no 4?*

*Hmmm.. This is the pub in the corner . . . i like to go to the pub but sometimes at night its not safe... but this when I just pass by I like this place as its functional and it complements the social activities for the people. It's nice and simple. hmmm...Not too safe. Because when people are drunk, there might be some danger but at the same time I understand that its a necessary space for a social life. and I have also seen some families coming along in this pub.*

*Why have you written simple for this?*

*hmmm..Well there are other pubs which are more comfortable, more appropriate... but this place in particular is simple and serves the function well.*

*You have ranked the image no 13 last, Could you explain on that?*

*hmmmm... actually I think I ranked it low because of the weather conditions the photo is depicting (smiling)it's too wet...I enjoy the space But when i saw the photo with the gloomy weather, I don't want to be in that place.*

*So depending on the weather condition it might appeal or not...?*

*Yes. There are lot of beautiful open spaces in this city in particular but when the weather conditions are too bad, we would prefer not to go out. Basically that's the reason.*

*So according to you first thing you would want in anyplace is to be is attractive and safety comes next?*

*Definitely. Familiar as well, it's more i have to have experienced that place to relate myself or engage with the place more freely*

*So if I say there's a place which is very attractive but it's not quite safe for you. Would you still prefer that place?*

*Yes. attractive could be first thing which will let me to want to go to a place but only when relate myself only then I will make it to be more familiar.*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*Okay.. In any public space I would like to have lots of seating because I have family and we have to look after the children so I like such spaces, which has lots of flowers, colours. Hmmm...playgrounds for children..or some kind of attraction for children to engage... some playing equipments like a see saw...*

*Then what else?*

*One important aspect is that the lighting conditions should be nice...*

*So is this because of the safety?*

*Yes but at the same time, the place should be attractive. Even if its a simple place, it can have different kind of pathways with some designs.*

*So safety you related to the lighting?*

*Yes..*

*What about the vehicles?*

*This place I'm assuming as a public open spaces without any vehicular movement...flowers.. trees.. and all related to nature.. and possible animals.. in this country I would expect the weather to be better...*

*is it this same kind of setting you would want in any context for you to relate yourself more?*

*I think that.. yes.. this is a place in any part of the world I will relate myself with such a place..*

*For my personal space, I will assume it to be my study space as generally it is my favourite personal space. I would like to I have all the facilities I need so that I can work properly and comfortably without any stress that something is missing. I like big windows like this and I would like to hear music.I would want to have enough space to move and don't feel... [Thinking]*

*Tight?*

*Exactly...hmmm... I would also prefer this space to be near a beach or generally a sea side.. yes.. i like to have that..personal space has to have sea side..*

*Why is that?*

*I don't know.. maybe it's just the complexity of the work activities and the need to experience a complete contrast which will be the sea a relaxing place..*

*But why not a park or any other place other than a sea..?*

*Maybe because I grew up in an island which is a small one surrounded by sea,so maybe this is related to my childhood memory*

*So if the same ambience in any place will evoke same experience?*

*Yes, this is all I ask. I feel happy.*

*Are there anything else for example objects which connects you with something..*

*No. I have just souvenirs one or two.. I want my place to be tidy and clear...*

#### **TASK 5 Discussions**

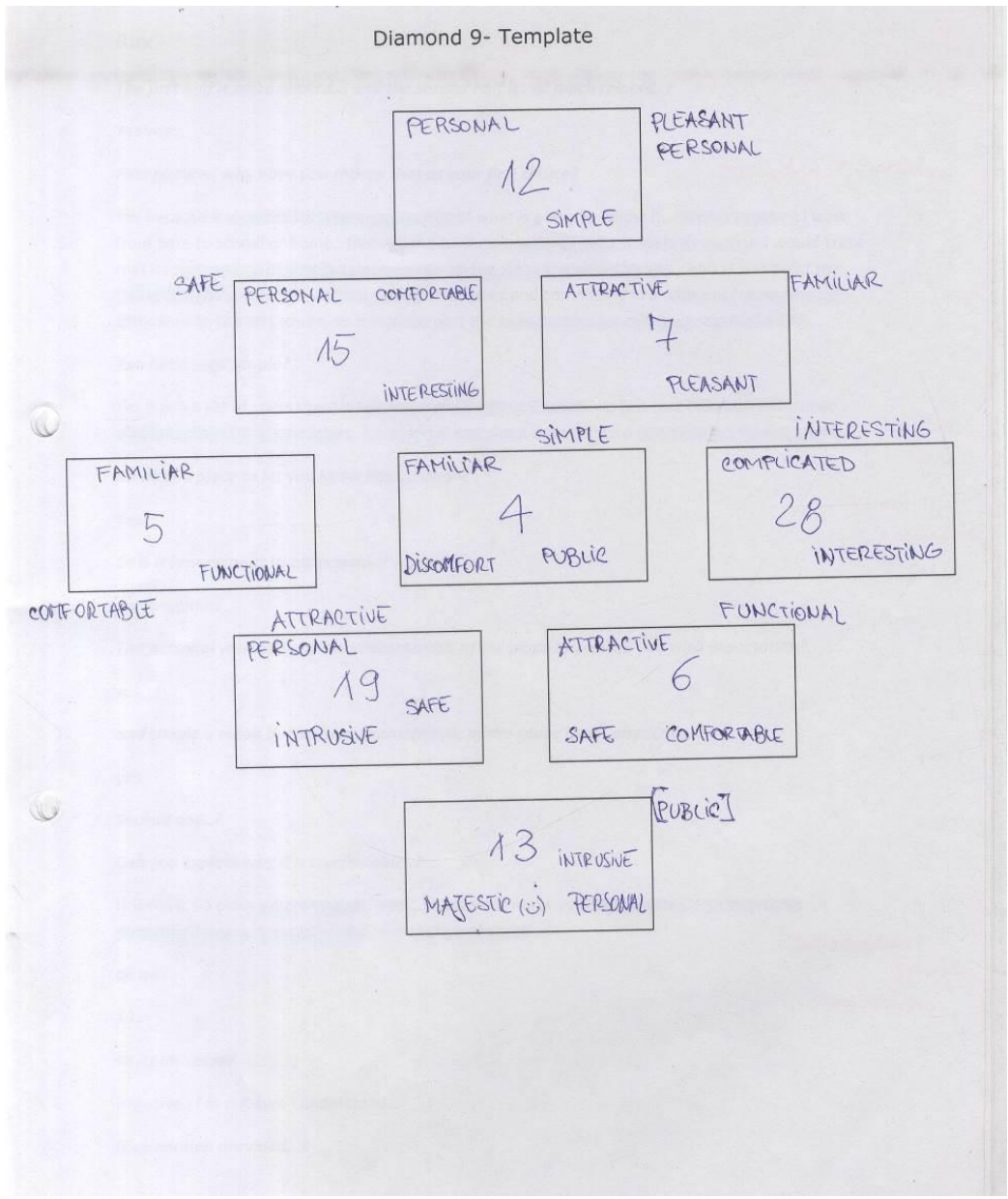
*In this last image, maybe because of the weather and its externals conditions.. I would ranked it low, or otherwise I the image 10*

*Yes this.. 10.. almost it's the little bit same. I found chairs in the place but they need a shade...*

*Okay.*

**Participant 3**

P3	Romanian
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Could explain the why have you chosen this image as your first choice?*

*Yes because the place incorporates the expectations of what is going to follow it. Every day when I walk from here to school or home through the park, i used to take these steps. I know that it's such a simple thing but once you go up the stairs the view changes and at this point my frame of mind would be walking through that area and completely in a different frame of mind compared to the arts tower. So for me it accommodates the expectations for different states of minds.*

*You have used 'simple'?*

*Yes it just a set of stairs there is nothing special about the space and it's just that it is in-between two places having strong characters. It's a simple transition between two completely different modes.*

*By 'personal' you mean ?*

*That characteristic of the place to provide you with expectation*

*and by 'simple' u mean ?*

*the physical form and characteristic of the space itself.*

*Something about your second ranked image? Can you explain why it is comfortable..?*

*Hmmm it's a place where I can stop. It does not make me uncomfortable to stop there, it accommodates my spontaneity very well.*

*For image 13 you have described it as 'intrusive' ?*

*Yes, If I would choose to sit here it will look weird and if I stand here, It is okay but only in the pretext of watching the ducks.*

*You mean to say that space is not accommodating?*

*yes, it's kind of pushing you away*

*I would like to talk about Oscars shop.*

*so why have you written complicated and why is it interesting?*

*Hmmm. I knew this place for a long time and and always this bit of place is really interesting and its with total contrast to what happens here which gives the entire composition something interesting and at the same time it makes it complicated..*

*Complicated?*

*Hmmm. You can't really understand the nature of it as a whole and you can't really say. I like this junction and I like bits of it somehow..*



*For you any place first have to be 'pleasant'?*

*Actually they are at the same ranking but they don't need to be in a hierarchy..*

*So safe comes later?*

*Yes..*

*Or have you assumed the word personal itself to have a inherent quality of safety into it?*

*Hmmm. No. 'Personal' would mean for me to already have passed through it but not necessarily familiar.*

*Ok So familiarity comes later.?*

*Yes. some of them might be familiar but I do not like them. I would not like them as places. Because of the fact that I'm familiar with them they would start to mean something.*

*Another thing is when you spoke about the word personal which is more of experience of something which relates to you which is important...?*

*I would not put them at all in the same..*

*So for you the first aspect should be personal only then familiarity comes in?*

*In familiarity I mean, it's a sort of experience which repeats itself and that's not something which is very meaningful, it's kind of repetition but personal means a kind of experience which a bit deeper somehow*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*so it's a tree? And what is the context...?*

*[Smiling] Any public space..*

*Can I leave it like this..?*

*Yes.*

*Can I assume any place in a world which has a tree can you relate yourself?..*

*I would not say any place but most of the places I relate myself will have tree in them.*

*Okay the context of public domain does not have a say on it?*

*it does actually could imagine the relationship it creates with the place around. It's the tree in the public space and not the tree in middle of the forest it would be meaningful to be in a public place more than it would be in a forest*

*And where you position yourself?*

*I would just like to passby.*

*So what about in case of a personal space?*

*A fence.*

*Some sort of an enclosure.?*

*It's a sort of a seating...*

*This is a fence..?*

*Yes.*

*and what is this considered.?*

*Anything say world outside mine.*

*This is yours..?*

*Yes.*

*So this is your ideal personal space..?*

*Hmmm. I would say the simplest and ideal.*

*So the most ideal would be?.. if you want to add something?*

*I will live in a tree if given a choice, that my ideal life.*

*It because? of some harmony with nature?*

*Hmmm. Yes but also it's just going away from the crowd and I also like climbing*

#### ***TASK 5 Discussions***

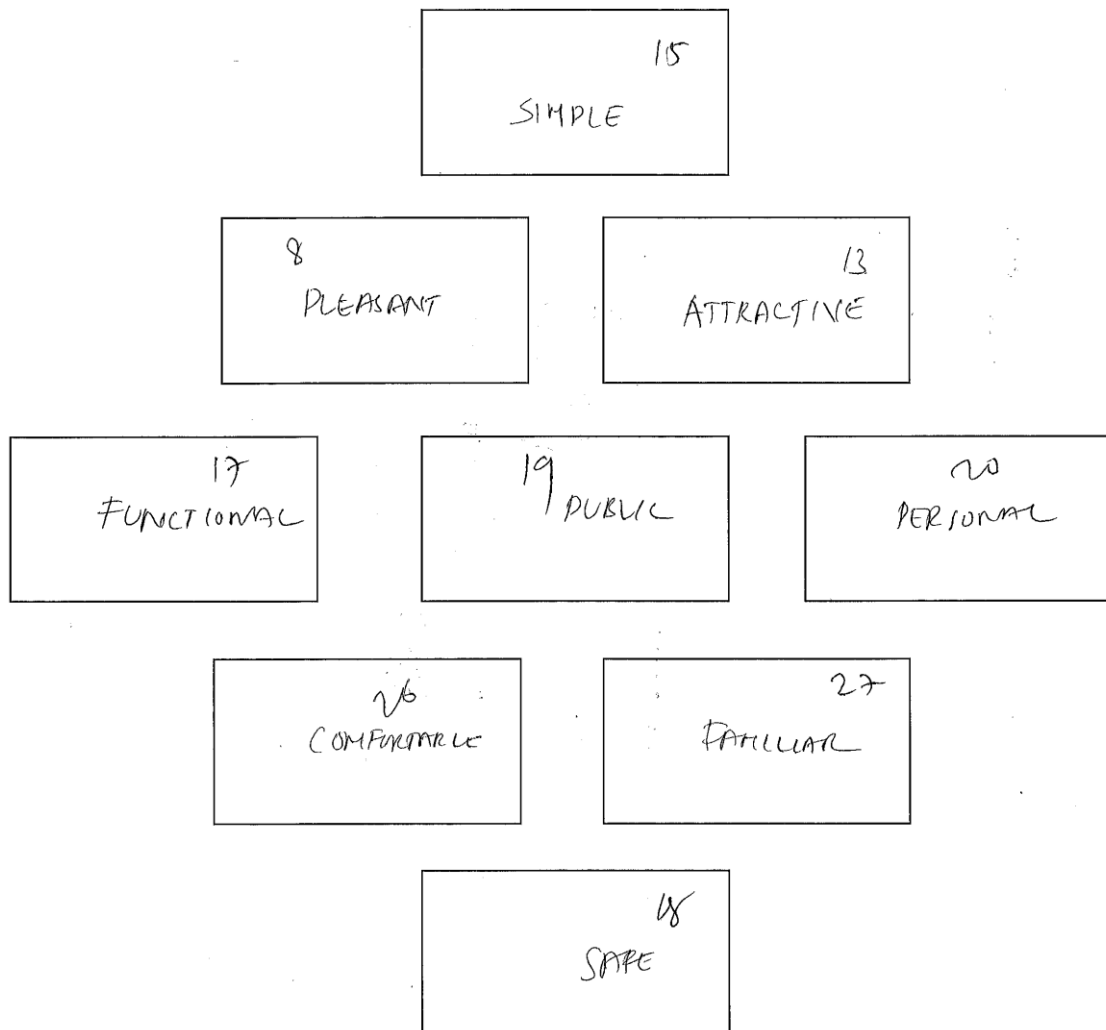
*This place I think in Image 28. if this has been a part of the public space, if you could walk through and remove this.*

*This you don't like?*

*No, this could be a seating area then it would be nice.*

**Participant 4**

P4	Thai
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*And what about this place could you tell me the reasons for ranking this high?[I]*

*The atmosphere of the park is beautiful, green space and water. Back home my house is close to the river and I have lived there for 23 years, my village also has similar bridge so this reminds me my place, makes me more relaxed and peaceful [P4]*

*And you placed this image as last ?*

*this one is related to my job. In future I have to live in a big city I have be a working woman and actually in my mind I still like country side but I know later in life I don't have option.*

*So is it something you relate to the building style ?*

*Yes, I think the building form is the modern and I think it shows the current life style, everyone has to enter the competition and have to be more competitive and this building gives that atmosphere we have to keep moving in life facing more competition, this is more commercial but send a strong message to me.*

*What about this image..?*

*I like this place..(smiling..) it reminds me of my childhood days. when I was a child I used to go to the temple at the mountains in my village. We had to climb, so when I saw this, I remembered that walk, because in Sheffield we have different ways to walk and I choose to walk in this steps.. because it reminds me of my childhood.*

*Have you actually used this space for sitting?*

*Yes I sat there sometimes and I don't like it (laughs) as its too dark and I remember usually I sit down only when it rained or to buy some posters or other stuff if they have some stalls.*

*Ok so because its dark you don't prefer that? but there are so many students who generally sit there*

*Hmmm. I think it's just because it's a place outside the building nearby and they like to be out outside the building. So in that case this is a comfortable place*

*Have you been to this place(Image 4)*

*Yes. I have been with my friend to this area and yes I have met some friends also. It's better than to be inside and go out sometimes. I like this building looks like an old fashioned house similar to my grandma house.*

*So all these places you have chosen saying you relate to these places. First thing you have said it has to be functional..*

*Yes, a place to be functional is very important. It makes my life easy. Yes.. yes...*

*For you comfort comes last?..Comparatively...*

*Actually I just like things to be simple not complicated not many things the house or in the building it blocks our imagination if you put too many things. I don't want put anything and clutter the environment. even in the public space it should be comfortable and simple..*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*Ok now the sketching task, how about public space?*

*(Sketching) I duno[...]how to draw the bench[...]*

*Ok so you want a bench to sit?*

*(Sketching) Yes and flowers something like that and a fountain*

*Then what else you want so that you can relate yourself more to that place?*

*It has to be green and green all around.*

*What about activities or people?*

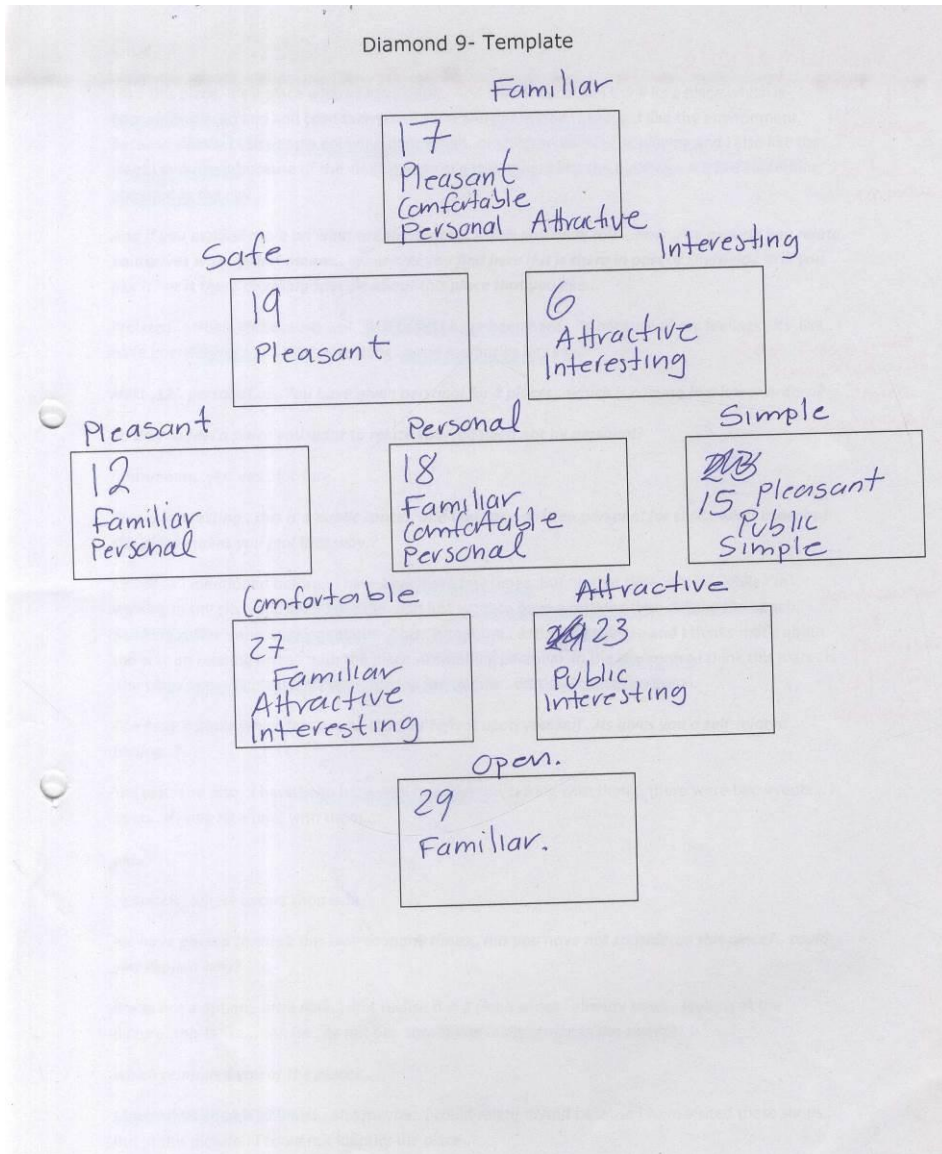
*Yes I want people to sit with me and interact, so another bench in this area to sit together. It should be like old fashioned tent. it's similar to Salaami in Thailand, Salaami is similar to house but it is in the public space only the roofs are there. Something like this like a small house.(smiling)*

*So what about your personal space?*

*I would like to have some flowers candles lamp like this. Want have a small table, some nice windows with curtains, I don't want bed, its my private space so instead of a bed I might want to have a chair, a long chair, we have something like this Thailand. I would like to have some pictures. A round table where people can talk, a small garden which my visitors can see and some nice paintings on the wall. I love reading sitting in this room.*

**Participant 5**

P5	Mexican
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Ok can you explain the reasons for your ranking of the this image as the top choice?*

*I like this place. It's a place where I have been. And I like it because I think its a place which is perfectly placed and I can take a seat here and get relaxed. I like the environment because usually I see people enjoying themselves or children walking or playing and I also like the trees the view and this tower, I like the buildings. It's like something enclosed in the city, feels cozy though it's a public space.*

*And if you expand more on what are the aspects which you have told you relate yourselves with.*

*few times I have been here and I related to this places. its because of my feelings, its like I have been happy. Yes, that's the thing, I associate this place to me because I have good memories attached to this place.*

*Next for image 12 you have written 'personal' and also you have given 'personal' for 2 places which is coming in a lower order. Can you explain this? And also this is a public space and you have written 'personal' for that, what aspect of the place makes you feel that way.?*

*Yes. think as I mentioned before.. I have been here few times. It's like, while I'm walking in the city and as I'm tired, I just want to have a relaxing time Sitting in the bench, Drinking coffee.. and thinking about my PhD. About me and many things and I thinks that's the the way I'm relating myself with the place. Something personal. In the city centre I think this place is the place I usually choose if I want to stop for a while that's why I think it's 'personal' to me.*

*So what specifically about the place which makes you to identify with this place?*

*I think a place which lets me to think or reflect upon myself gives a self-related feeling and also I have been here with two friends talking with them and some other instances in this place where I had a nice time.*

*ok..*

*And what about this image 28? we have passed through this way so many times.. but you have not considered this place?.. could you explain why?*

*until now I dint realise this a place whichI already know, looking at the picture. But even there is nothing really strong in the picture for me as the previous one which I discussed.*

*In Image 23, what did you mean by public an open space? Social interaction?*

*yes..*

*So familiarity is crucial for you in identifying with the place.?But while you had chosen the image you have included a image which is familiar in a lower order?*

*I think this is also, familiar. But maybe I just didn't write it all the places that I have chosen are familiar for me..*

*But why have you mentioned familiar just for these two images?*

*Well, I think maybe these place I walk very often..*

*fine*

*For image 29 you have written to be open, what did you actually mean by open?*

*I like open spaces. I don't like very much closed spaces so spaces with windows..*

*you want openness?*

*I think I feel safe. When its open, that's the main point I relate more to feeling safe when its open don't like too much spaces that doesn't have windows. Or I prefer always be in a place where I don't look at the wall and I look at the windows. Outside, but I think, I relate it more to safety as I mentioned earlier.*

*Fine..*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*I'm thinking how to draw in plan or in 3d.*

*Anything which is comfortable for you.*

*Well its one street, I don't straight street, more curvilinear would like maybe this is the line where the cars are here because cars needs to go straight but people can walk in different ways. I would like to have lots of pedestrian areas, with trees and then maybe some shops can be here around the street. And here I would like to have some benches, so people can be walking and at the same time taking a seat and this is a bus stop for example and it has to be more integrated..*

*So anyplace like this you would definitely related yourself with?*

*Yes. I think I relate myself with places that I enjoy walking and I think also places I can keep in my memory and in my mind which is something positive.*

*when you say you like places where you can enjoy walking, so is it more about the safety aspect which comes along? As I can see in your sketch you have clearly demarcated the cars and pedestrians ?*

*yes safety and openness because you are walking and you don't have to take care of the cars. as you know cars are so many metres away and you can walk here relaxed*

*And about the shops?*

*Well thinking it in the context of a commercial street, something like in a city centre and I think even if this is in any part in the world, this is one of the thing which I relate myself more with which is the*



*way I walk in the street is different, it's not stressful, I do not like when people are just walking in one direction, its different when you have open spaces and when you walk more slowly as you can really look what is around.*

*What about personal space ?*

*Okay, I'm thinking. I'm going sketch and explain about my studio, my place where I'm working every day. Okay..I think, something with many windows and also large spaces. I don't like to feel uncomfortable in very tight spaces. I will have a studio in a place I will be working. Here I want to have my table with computer looking outside.I will like to have a comfortable sofa. I don't like a space to have too many things it has to be minimal. Yes I like big spaces but not with many things in a wall with a library in lots of shelves. Nice carpet or rug here with many pillows, where I can take a seat and take a book and read. A nice view from here. For me it's also very important what I'm looking at when I'm in this space. I don't like too much of height but also if I have an option I always prefer to be not in the ground level don't like ground level..*

*Why?*

*Because in the ground level you have only cars and shops in front of you but when you are little bit higher I can have a more open view of the city, but only if I'm a little bit up I can have a different view but also not too high. let's say in the first and second level because I can still perceive the scale of the people and cars. And I enjoy to have a view of trees, that is important for me, to have one tree here like this. Because its open the tree also can provide me with a bit of privacy.*

*So any part of the environment if this room is there you can completely relate yourself...?*

*Yes. For example I'm imagining this space with lots of light, I imagine so many things in this place. But the main idea is to have space, with lots of windows, big and with not many elements inside. That's all what I meant by I writing open.*

*so this is an ideal place?*

*Yes for me..*

### **TASK 5 Discussions**

*I would say image 29 and I'm going to tell you why. When I'm in any place which I don't like, I'm always thinking how I will transform this place as I don't like this space, What I will change to make a difference. In this case I don't like this place though it is familiar but I don't like the environment because it's too grey and its a lot of pavement. It's very open but I think this shall be improved if it could have more lighting like in the city centre. A big area which has lots of lighting in the floor, more lighting and also more trees or maybe flowers. I know this is a public space but sometimes university uses this for some events or maybe then they have some elements that they can move. Like mobile elements but with more flowers and colour. This looks like too industrial and I don't like this and I think for a university this space should be different..*

*So with colours you will relate yourself with..?*

*Yes with colours with flowers or plants and lighting it becomes more positive.*

*So if all this were there you have ranked it higher..?*

*Yes. I think places where you can have different experiences like seating, moving etc. it is nice to relate oneself with..*

*Of course people sit here..*

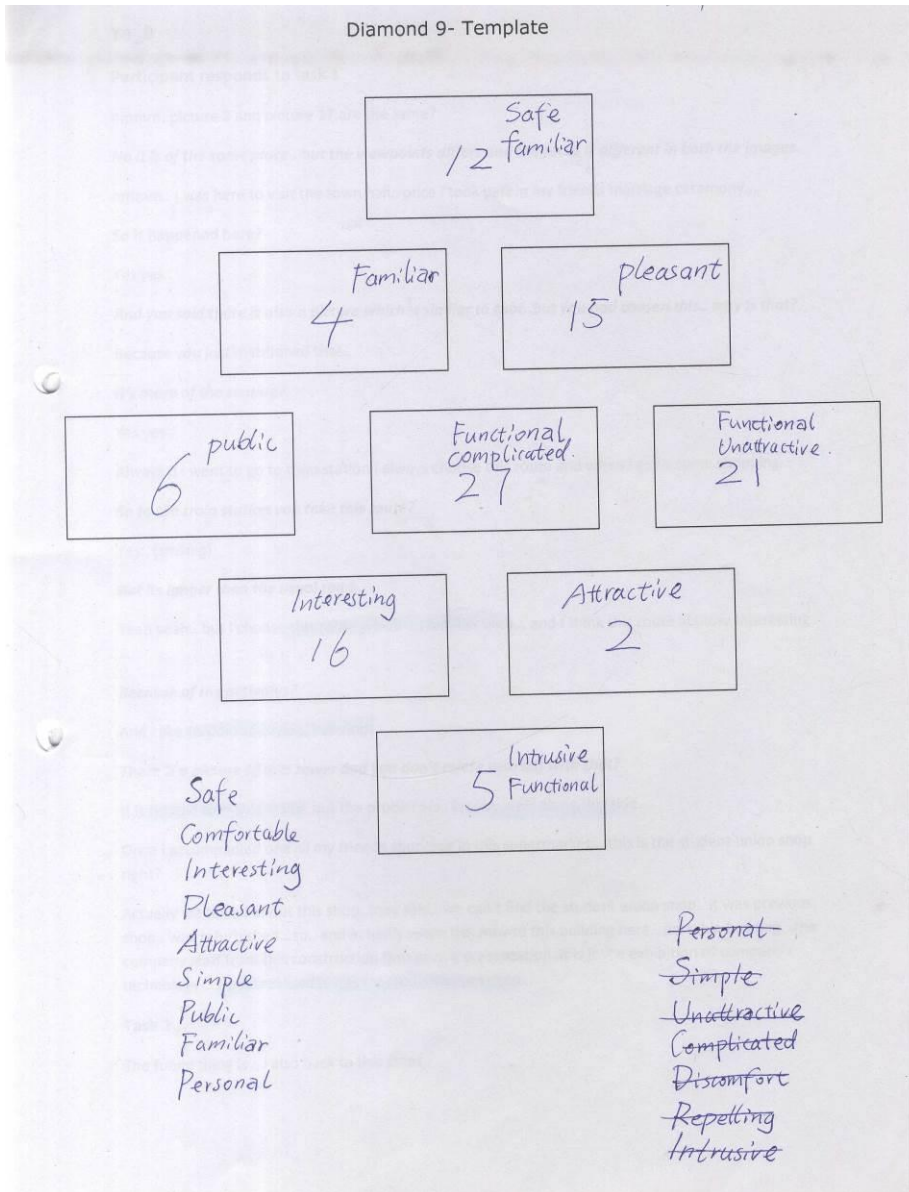
*But I have been sitting these places and its horrible. Because I don't think they sit here because they like it's because its near to some place. For example the bicycle stand is here or shop is here. But it's not really because they want to be here.*

*It's more for a convenience..?*

*Yes*

**Participant 6**

P6	Chinese
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*picture 2 and picture 17 are the same?*

*No it is of the same place but the viewpoints differs and the focus is different in both the images.*

*I was here to visit the town hall to take part in my friends marriage ceremony...*

*So it happened here?*

*Yes. Also whenever I went to the train station I always choose this route and also when I go to some shopping.*

*So you take this route to the train station?*

*Yes. (smiling)*

*But its longer than the usual road..*

*Yeah but I choose this route as I am familiar with it and I also think this route is more interesting because of the traditional style of buildings.*

*There is a picture of arts tower but you have not ranked it?*

*It is related to my daily life but the problem is I rarely walk along this side. Once I accompanied one of my friend for shopping in this supermarket.*

*You have written 'safe' for this image, but isn't it quite an as its quite an isolated route compared to the way people walk right??*

*Though it is behind the library, there is always some students present here, it is also a smoking area I think.*

*you did tell that every day you pass-through the space but why the familiar word did not come into the picture? Is it because safety is more important?*

*Yeah, but actually I think I should also include familiar...*

*In image 4, my first impression is just about 'familiar' and gradually I feel this place is more public or maybe it's also related to the time I passed through the space so its during lunch time I passed and it was always crowded. I see this place more related to 'function' as the first reason I go to this place is with the objective of buying food.It quite complicated here.*

*Could you explain further why it is complicating for you?*

*It the traffic, buses come and there are no clear pedestrain*

*Ok*

*And this is Primark which again I would say is functional, but the reason why I functional here is different from Image 27. I have this feeling just because of the form of the building. Yes its about the building form and the façade which makes me feel it is a typical functional space and unattractive form.*

*what you have written in the first image is safe and familiar and then image which is ranked in the lower order you have written is attractive, so is this not an image you relate more because it is also attractive? But safe and familiarity had taken a primary role for relating yourself?*

*For me direct relationship with that place is more important than anything else.*

*My question is it because you have not visited it more you did not rank it higher?*

*I know what you are trying to say. You are asking if its attractive why I have not ranked it higher.*

*Exactly*

*It is attractive but not related to me.*

*Ok*

*Why is this intrusive?*

*(Smiles..)*

*Hmmm. Actually this building is kind of different how can I say that?*

*Do you mean to say it has a different kind of style?*

*hmmm. actually the building has no relationship with the context, I mean the car park. It's a form which is totally not comparable. I am not getting the right word to describe that.*

*Do you mean it is incompatible?*

*Doesn't match. Yes, Incompatible to the context. when I knew it was the student union shop is in this building, I think I will never go to this building except if I want something like souvenir and any other things I want to buy other stuff I would rather go to Sainsbury opposite the road than this*

*Ok*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*First things that comes to to my mind is chair and then maybe I prefer seating arranged circularly*

*So a kind of a group seating?*

*Yes, more or less. The reason why I like this type of seating is because if I just sit on my own i can choose to sit my place and will also have establish a boundary for myself. Also even if i come with my friend still we can choose a place for our privacy.*

*So you mean to say there is a kind of flexibility ?*

*Yeah there is more choice in the way we can engage with the spaces this way.*

*So any public space which has such seating area you can relate yourself to?*

*No, not only seating area but a kind of a place in which we can offers a sense of flexibility.*

*What about personal space?*

*This is very difficult for me to answer, as I am not a person who take effort to add things, or decorate in a personal space.*

*Ok let me think, yes I would want to have a window in my room*

*Yeah. but this is not my choice because if this a fixed space, I can't add a window in this wall tight?*

*its just a hypothetical context so you have the freedom*

*then I would like to have some plants, because I my place to feel natural, I want to see life not only myself.*

*But the space you have occupied now does not have provide much opportunity for this, but you have done all this in your current space?*

*[Laughing] its a PhD writing up room.*

*So No personal feeling?*

*Yes.This is just work. for me its more convenient for me to do experiment...*

*But there is no plant to see life?*

*That room is more public as I said earlier its a writing up room and I don't want to add any personal stuff there. What you are saying is my office, it has nothing personal to it because its office.*

*So according to you it is not personal at all..*

*No, Its common room and I don't want to add any personal thing there..*

*So which you consider as personal space? In your accommodation?*

*Personal space is my home in china not here sorry [laughing]*

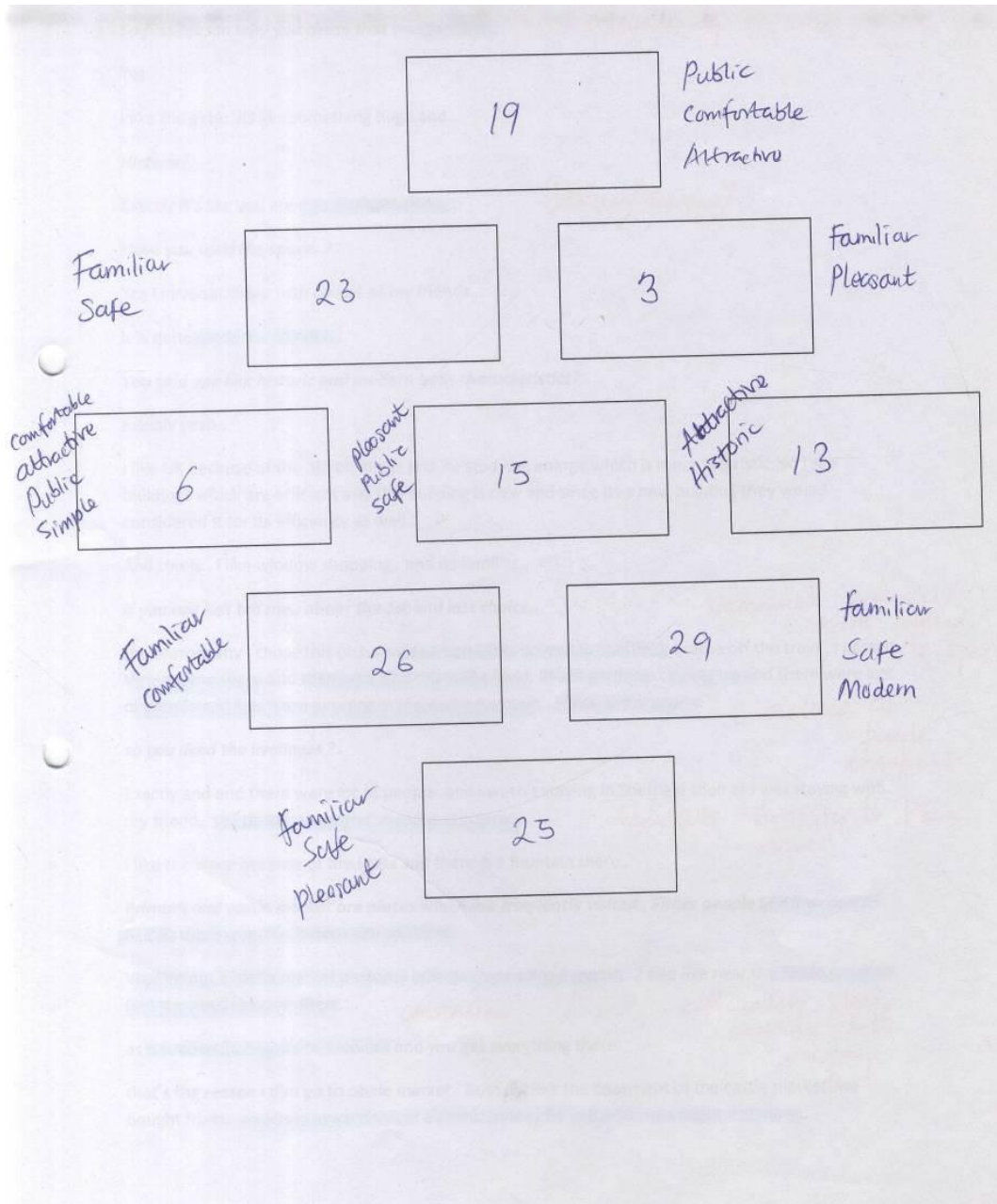
*Or may if I have an individual office I will have some plants. And I want to see the physical world more clear and more tidy as there is already so much chaos in mind so real life to be more tidy.*

#### **TASK 5 Discussions**

*I would say Image 6 if I can add a take-away food in car here, it makes life easier so I can take my food from here It is very easy just have a car a kind of portable food shop and I never get into this restaurants. I don't know why, may be because it is something about the facade. People also choose places we they are familiar with. This place outside has so many seating area and it is also more public and we can sit here look and people and eat.*

Participant 7

P7	Nigerian
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*I chose this because its familiar to me. I like the gate especially because it's like something huge and historic its gives a different experience as I you are entering something.*

*Have you used the space?*

*Yes I have sat there with couple of my friends.it is quite modern and near.*

*You said you like historic and modern both characteristics?*

*Exactly like UK because of the old buildings and I'm studying energy which is more futuristic. So I see buildings which are efficient and this building is new and since it's a new building they would have considered it for its efficiency as well.*

*And this is because I like window shopping and its familiar.*

*Can you tell me about the 1st and last ranked image?*

*the reason why I chose this picture was when I first arrived in Sheffield, I came off the train. I passed through the space and then I realised this is Sheffield. Peace gardens, City centre and there were lots of people and kids were jumping in the water fountain. I liked the whole ambience.*

*so you mean you liked the liveliness of the place?*

*Exactly. There is always lot of people and I wasn't staying in Sheffield then as I was staying with my friend, so I passed through the space regularly.*

*I like the place because of the seating area and there is a fountain there all this allows people to enjoy the space and makes the entire place more lively.*

*Primark and castle market are places which are frequently visited, Either people like it or don't like it, there is rarely in-between opinions. What do you think about that?*

*Well I'm not a castle market person. I only go there once a month. I also live near the Tesco so I don't feel the need to come there. As it is open 24 hrs its convenient and you get everything there. That's the reason I don't go to castle market but I did like the basement of the castle market. We bought fruits and its is much cheaper as well, so may be in the future I might use more.*

*Ok image 25, yes I don't know exactly the name of this street, this is the place where the shops are located on both sides throughout the street ?*

*Yes, Fargate area?*

*Oh is it called Fargate?, I dint know that. But I feel like I'm at home here. There are pedestrian pathways where we walk down the market and we got shops on the right and left... and normally unlike shops here, the shop in my home country are only outside and people call... 'Come to my shop...' 'Come to my shop'... 'I've got this...' 'I've got that...'*

*Interesting, you have just used the word home in your discussion about the place, yet you have ranked it much lower. Any reason for that?*

*Maybe because you don't have the transition which is there in that picture you come to Sheffield and there are people around and you see them then you realise this is Sheffield..*

*So this is more about the first impression of the place, like you have come from your home to a new place because of which you like this place more?*

*If you see the pictures I've chosen, it all more related to market place and shops. When I'm not studying in the weekends I like to walk seeing lot of people and children and then I go to shop, try something and then I go to another shop just while away time, I do a lot of window. I generally do that a lot that's why you see that I have chosen such places and there is always people around and you feel safe.*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*Something like, the fargate area it has nice walking space and if there were more seats it would be nice. I also cycle a lot to fargate but unfortunately, let me show you its the picture 26, you can't see from here, there is only one cycle stand at the far end and in picture 3 there are one or two near Marks and Spencer's, if only there were some cycle stand I would have parked my cycle there which will be very comfortable for me*

*Okay you said you like outdoor so you want to enjoy it with some seats. ok so any place, an outdoor place with seats you can relate yourself to?*

*Yes, you know its more about comfort of a place which makes me to identify myself with the place, I can relate to the place I mean. An outdoor place it should have shade we tend to believe the sun is hot but not here they do sunbathing. I just sit in sun just because my friends sit there but in home i can't do that so here maybe I would want to have a tree which is more comfortable for me*

*If its going be a personal space?*

*I think it depends on country.*

*In Sheffield?*

*In Sheffield the first thing I want in this space is heating, I mean the physical comfort. once its warm its very comfortable if is cold I'm not going to feel comfortable here. Next is, I'm a TV person. Yes I want to watch something, some programmes.*

*So there is nothing related to privacy or anything of that sort?*

*So if I leave you in this room with heating and a TV it will be fine for you? you will completely enjoy it?*

*Yes if its warm and I have a TV and give me a remote plus I have my phone with me any place is fine for me but then Im a Muslim my religion plays a very important part so where ever I'm staying now*

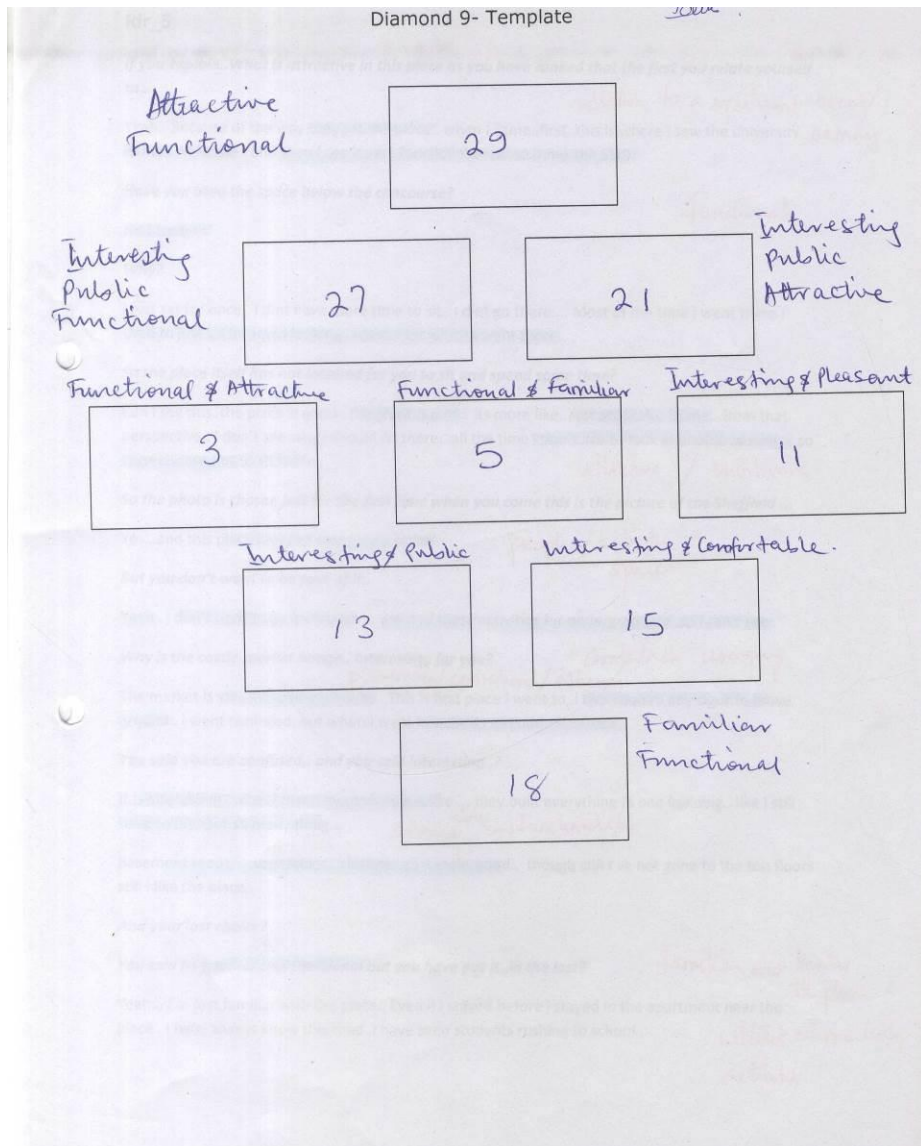
*I have access to the mosque. So that would affect me the proximity to the mosque is very important for me.*

*Is it more about the practical aspect of the proximity of the mosque ?The comfort you are talking about is more in terms of the functional aspect or something else?*

*Yes but the point is: I need to pray and in a way helps me to mingle with my people. The social aspects I mean, When I go to pray, it makes me comfortable with my people. We meet say 'Hi, Salaam'...*

Participant 8

P8	Nigerian
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Can you explain why You have ranked this image first?*

*Yeah, Because of the way the place is set. when I came to Sheffield first, this is where I saw the university name and the welcome sign and then I see it very functional because it has the SSID.*

*Have you used the space below the concourse?*

*No I haven't*

*Why?*

*I just sat there once. I dint have more time to sit and I dint go there specifically for that. Most of the time I went there I used to just go Student Union for different things.*

*So the place is not the reason why you sat there?*

*Ok let me say this, the place is good but it is also dark, its not attractive to me from that point. I don't see why I should sit there and all the time I don't like to look at people passing so I just choose not to sit there.*

*So the photo is chosen because of the first time experience of Sheffield?*

*Yes and this place looks so nice. Very active*

*But you don't want to be part of it?*

*Yeah. I just used to pass through as most of these activities is for undergraduates so I don't feel that space suits me.*

*You Have written 'interesting' for Castle Market could You explain that more?*

*The market is very close to my house. When I went to this place first time, It was confusing but when I went in, wow I thought it was so good. Fantastic place.*

*You said you are confused and you also say interesting?*

*It is interesting but what I mean by confusing that so many shops, different shops also but everything in one building. Though I have gone there several times still think I have to find out so many things inside Castle Market. In Basement section there are vegetables, clothes and many more so it looks good. Still I've not gone to the top floors like the place.*

*And your what about your last choice? You have written familiar and functional?*

*Yeah, I'm just familiar with the place. I have always known this road...I have seen students rushing to the school everyday*

*Of all these images, most of the images related to familiarity then the functional aspect of the place.?*

*Yeah, most of the places I use them for some purpose.*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*For public space, I will say I will have a park with more trees and seats under the trees and some place like a tent similar to those in my village it feels nice and relaxed*

*Why you want these huts?*

*It belongs to my place and also It looks natural. It makes you feel nice. in such a places you feel you are natural that's why. Also from where I came home, most of the parks have all those huts and you feel like you are natural. Something like being part of the nature itself.*

*And most of the times when you find something really nice it makes you feel comfortable used to go the western park and I used to go to the blue colour hut, i feel nice to look into green space all around.*

*Even for personal space, this will be okay for me.*

*So for you place where people will be seeing you is similar to even a personal space?*

*No, it is not like how u say, if I have small green area this is my personal space.*

*So its all about greenery which makes you feel related? If I provide you with lots of greenery you will happily settle down here in this room?*

*[Laughing] You can only put carpet here.*

*So you mean to say you need to be in ground.?*

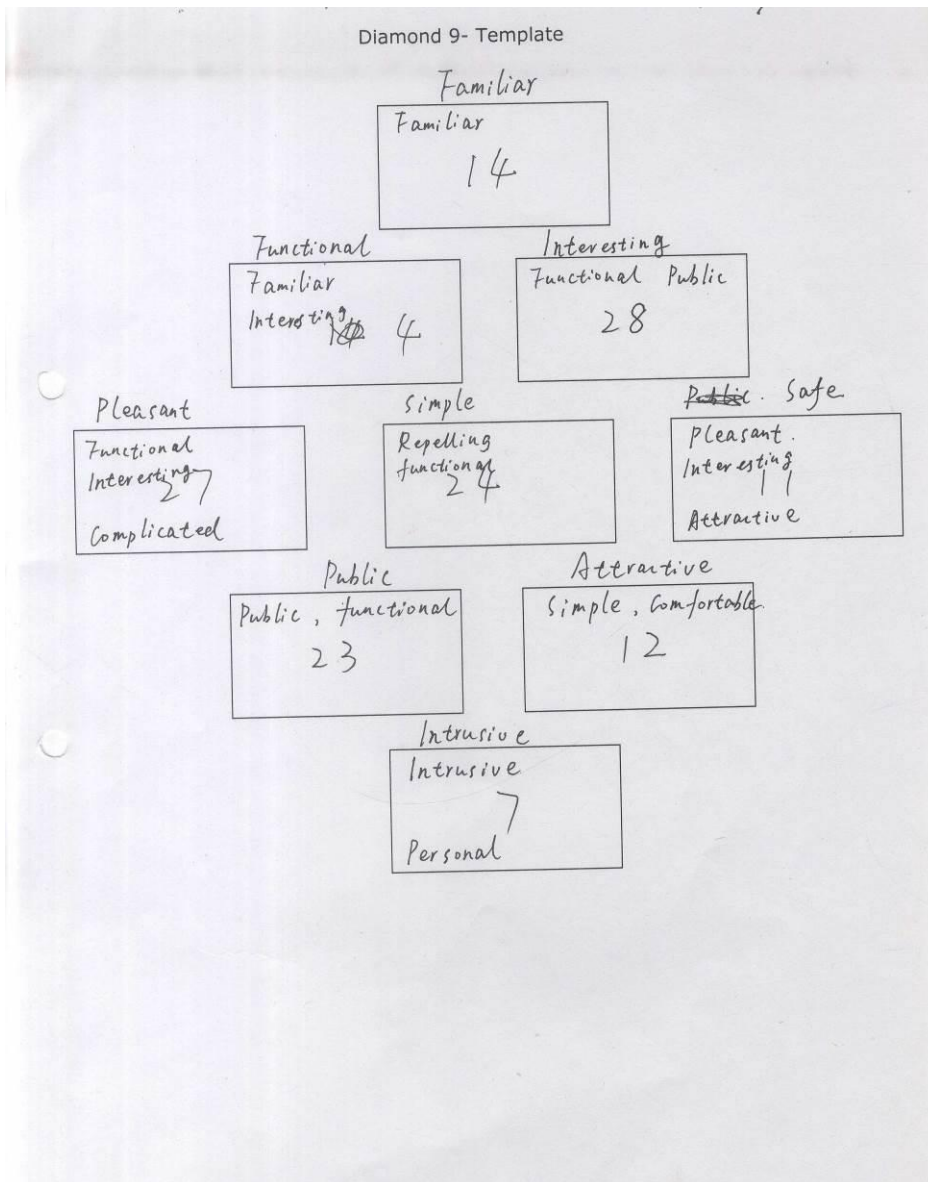
*Yes, It has to be natural want to make my life simple. And by simplicity I mean being part of nature. That's when you can enjoy this life..*

### **TASK 5 Discussions**

*I want more fountains here because there's only one fountain I want more greenery and water.*

Participant 9

P9	Chinese
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*You have chosen 14 as your best place to relate yourself with, Could you expand on that...*

*Yeah. Nothing special it just I use this place most often..*

*So the place itself does not have any characteristic quality because of which you had chosen it?*

*Yeah I just pass by, its more a functional meaning which is very important for me in a place.*

*Is this a way you come to the arts tower from your home?*

*yes.*

*so you come from the Crookesmoore right?*

*Yeah.*

*So is that way quite often used or this?*

*That way.*

*so why did you chose this if its is only based on how often you pass by?*

*But I seldom use this side of the way..*

*If I had included an image from other direction.. your choice would be that?*

*Yeah yeah..*

*So in terms of spatial characters therez nothing special?*

*No*

*Okay..*

*What about image 4?*

*I often go to happy house and buy in Sainsbury.*

*And you have also written interesting?*

*Yes this part of the place is interesting.*

*I had always seen people standing and talking outside the bar which is a sort of a spill over place, night I will always avoid this side.*

*But still you have chosen this to be the most related image*



*It's not because of the place, which I avoid it because of the guy standing outside the bar as they may be risky for us but I like the colour of the building is lovely. The bar has more elder people and also young people using it.*

*So are you talking about family coming to the bar or.. Elderly people..?*

*Older people I mean. Yeah.*

*Ok, what about image 28?*

*Yeah, this also I use it everyday.*

*So all places you had chosen is more for its familiarity?*

*Yes for me familiarity with the place is the first thing which make me relate to a place.*

*Ok let's see your last choice image 7*

*It has a bench. It's a lovely place, it has some layers. It's a secondary place if possible I can use this space everyday. This is sometimes there are people sitting, so I won't go there.*

*The furniture itself is long enough to accommodate two?*

*Not really. And it's not a compulsory choice. There are many seats there other option so if two people sit there they are couples.*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*So maybe this is my home and this is my office so this place which I relate myself with should be between my home and office*

*Oh really?*

*Yes that's what makes it most related to me..*

*So again you mean to stress upon familiarity?*

*Yeah we say we are leading a life between two points, between home and work. So it is this line which is important, a very simple life so if we have enjoy this line.*

*Sounding so philosophical?*

*[Laughing]*

*If I can put a table tennis table here, I can possibly occupy this area for example in opal 2 or some other public space, if here there is a table tennis table, I will feel this area as a personal space because I can use it more often than others.*

*its like..my advantage..if i can use.. that place better or more open so it makes this place more related to me..*

*And in terms of the space itself what do you want?*

*A nice place where I can play and it has to be more open.*

*Can we say that taking your concept of making the space more available makes you feel more related to the place?*

*Yes of course I should be able to access the place whenever I wish that's the the most basic need and then a bench for rest maybe, there is a table, a round table with some stone seats where we can play card game.*

*So all this is you want it to be a part of a public space..?*

*Yes I would feel comfortable then.*

*Image 24, you have said repulsive and functional*

*Yes.. but it has nothing special for me, for example the table here is for eating. So its nothing to do with me and there are some bicycle parking area. I choose it because this area lead to many different places.*

*there are many seating areas but I never sat here..*

*Why is it? I have seen lots of Chinese students using that space...*

*I think its to public if i sit it may be just because I want to rest for a while but the place is too crowded and noisy but I can't rest. Maybe I can have a conversation with my friend but I do not prefer a noisy place.*

*In case if this is not a place where people pass through will you sit there?*

*Yeah maybe and if also has some places which are corner spaces or some kind of enclosed spaces.*

*So a place has to allow you to use and have some specific use for you?*

*Yes, If I can use the space more than others. Because often in china,, we have some outdoor table tennis outside our house we have 8 tables and I go with my father everyday to play so that's why I wanted that way.*

*If we put TT table in a park space you will use it more also you can relate yourself to the home country as well, Because of which it is more related?*

*For example two tables in Sheffield near the train station I feel more related maybe I won't use that but I would like to pass by go through that path Seeing people playing. And I will always see if some people are playing there*

*If its my personal space, I will make some obstacle like tables so that for people it is not easy to reach me yeah not very easy to access.*

*Are you trying to say there should be a hierarchy of privacy before people reach you ?*

*Yeah that's the way all people occupy space would like to introduce obstacles at different levels. For that may be I will re arrange them the table or furniture.*

*Maybe if I can put some book shelves. And put some my books on it or maybe I can put my bag there I tend to tell people these spaces are mine.*

*so trying to establish a sense of territory?*

*Yes my boundary, my territory that's the key.*

### **TASK 5 Discussions**

*First remove the printer first that's the most public device which can be reached remotely as well (laughs) Yes even the people are not here..But still they can make some noise by this.*

*somebody is always connected to this, Yes and anytime it may be controlled.*

*What if the printer is not working? Still will it trouble you?*

*Even if its a waste, nobody use it, I would still want to remove it.*

*Why is that?*

*If I use it its fine but I don't use it. for example if somebody go back to his home.. and he left some rubbish here I would definitely would clean it immediately. Even if it's of no use it occupies the space and I want my place to clean and tidy..*

*Now in this kitchen space which is a sort of public space. Does the printer even bother you now ? You are in a public space and there is a personal space for you temporarily still the printer nags you?*

*I think yes if I have my lunch, i want to take a 10 min break here and there was not printer then I would come here.*

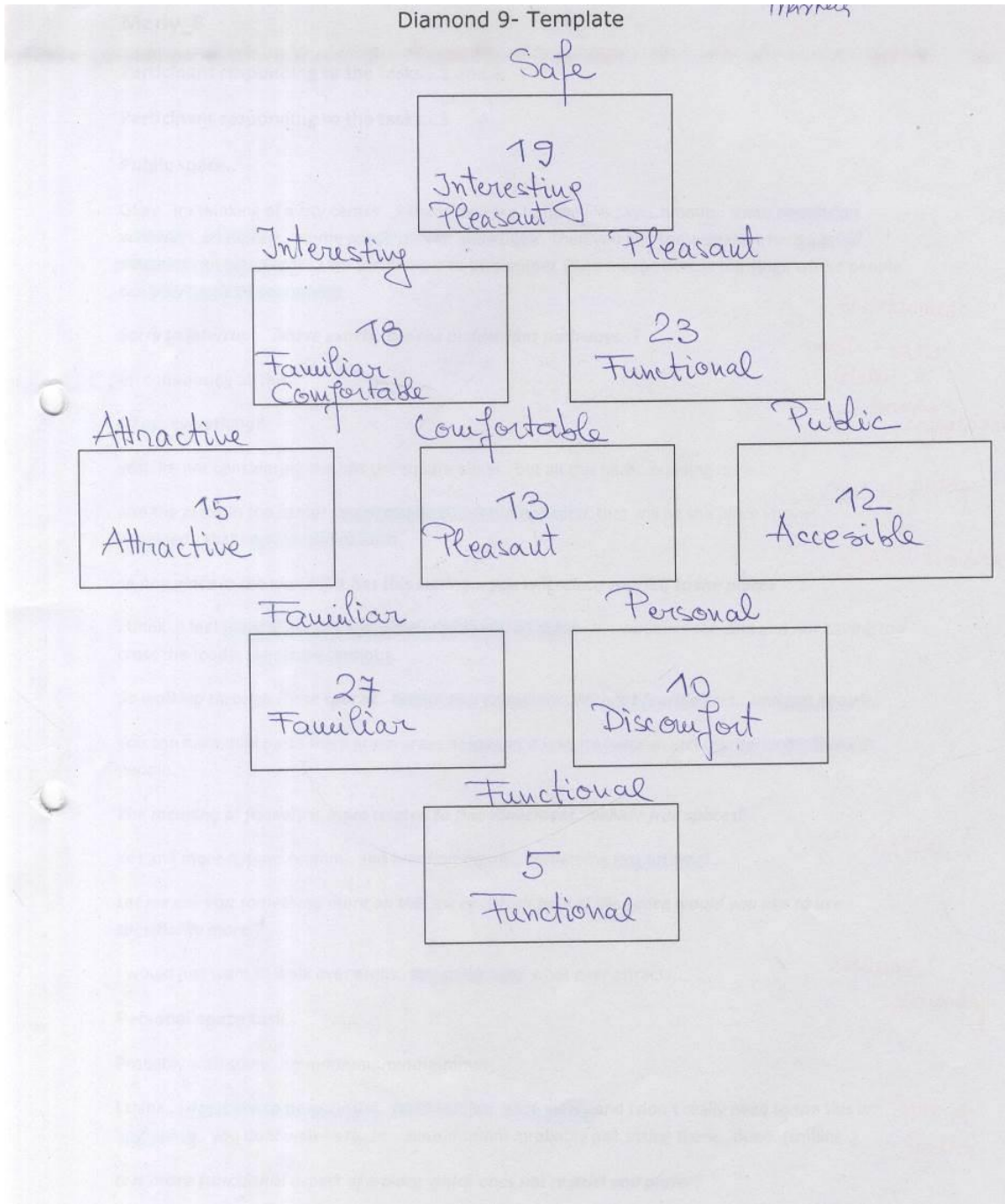
*So its the printer which seems to be the main problem rather than the people who are eating in the table?*

*That's fine. Yes I can expect who is sitting there but for this things its kind of unknown even and very unexpected also maybe suddenly come out sound. Sometimes I feel unknown is so much of fear because it is without my control.And in spatial terms it's something which is not seen clearly not seen properly,I think I can categorise place into three types..*

*One that I can completely control, I know everything about it spatially and functionally what is going to happen. Second, if I can't control it at least I can get some information. Third is I have no control, no means to find information like the drunk people or may be like this printer [Laughing].*

**Participant 10**

P10	Romanian
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*How this picture which you have ranked last?...*

*Yes. It's because it's close to the university and sometimes when u need pencils or something I can just go and get it from there so very functional*

*you have also given the 'interesting' quite a lot of importance in your choices. .?*

*yes. hmmm yes I think so.*

*But actually speaking none of the images actually made you feel safe.. Interesting occupies higher position and another thing is there is a 'familiar' here and a 'familiar' here which is image 18. Can you explain this more?*

*when I said familiar I meant where I experience something related to my work, research or my studies and this arts tower and I think I chose Image 27 castle market because it was my project study*

*Of the all the images you have chosen are there any image where there is an emotional aspect attached to a place because of which you feel related to the space more?*

*this one, My mom was here during summer on a weekend, it was a sunny day and they had a stage here and lot of young people performed playing music all day, it was fantastic and I almost felt I belonged there with the people and with the activities*

*okay...*

*Let me see Image 12 could you please tell me something about this place?*

*hmmm this is where I spent my time of study and probably this is the entrance which I used, like this one better as it is more accessible from the tower..*

*so in terms of entrance you like this one...*

*Yes I like this one. It was my most frequented path to visit the park it was really useful But its not an appealing place, it doesn't look appealing like 'come to the park' this looks more like 'okay this is interesting' like lets go see what's there but this rejects me.*

*Why is that..?*

*hmmm I don't know for an entrance to a park I don't feel like using it.*

*You have written 'discomfort' somewhere?*

*Yes. Castle market..*

*Hmmm. it's because how I feel in this place. Its deserted, very badly lit and it looks a bit derelict and that's why I feel uncomfortable...There are proper seating still there are no people. The whole area behind looks so derelict. Even if you put chairs in front it doesn't change.*

*According to me safety comes which I have been quite explicit about this aspect throughout*

*When the discussion is about relating yourself to, Yet the word personal had taken a lower ranking...?and you also told about liking for open spaces Which are not restrictive...is it because of your personal nature?*

*Hmmm. I am identifying with open spaces. it does not have to be personal I don't want to appropriate a place it can be a shared space as long as it's interesting and open and it had people and activities I feel comfortable there so I relate to the place.*

*So I understand that the word personal you have taken to be more 'restrictive'?*

*Yes when you appropriate something that other people can't use then that's your personal but you are showing public spaces actually so it can be like you can't cross your limits.*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*Okay. I'm thinking of a city centre, I think I will like to have like say hmmm, some pedestrian walkways. So no cars, some green spaces, and edges. Then you just some space where a lot of activities can take place am assuming it to be summer. And maybe here is the stage where people can play music or something..*

*Sorry to interrupt where exactly are the pedestrians pathways..?*

*I'm considering all this.*

*Okay. everything?*

*Yes. I'm not considering the just the square alone but all this here there are some building here and the areas in the canter. there can be cycles but not cars that will be the place I have imagined that I would love to be in.*

*So any place in the world if it has this setting you will relate yourself to the place?*

*I think I will feel more attracted and comfortable in that place. If I wouldn't see cars and not having to cross the roads always be cautious. So walking through these spaces wandering anywhere without fearing cars and just people around. You can have mini parks were green areas as long as it is more natural and more friendly towards people.*

*The meaning of friendly is more related to free movement,vehicle free spaces?*

*Yes and more nature. hmmm I mean something less artificial.*

*Let me ask you something more on this space. which part of the space would you like to use specifically more.?*

*I would just want to walk over areas to experience whatever attracts...*

*Then if it's going to be a personal probably with some [thinking]I don't like to be enclosed.. no obstacles, should have wide views I don't really need to see this is 'my' space you don't walk here so hmmm probably just sitting there [smiling]*

*Is it more functional aspect of a place which does not restrict you prefer?*

*Hmm. personal space you mean, yeah I think so I mean if I have my personal I like see for example my desk I have my personal objects, so already I identify with that spaces..*

*So you might make a place relate to you with objects? that satisfies your need of identifying with that space?*

*no.*

*So what are those spatial and an emotional aspect which makes you identify with that place?*

*I think it depends on the space it should be comfortable and I don't need to change some things or objects to get light, otherwise I need to have clear space around me and like to keep them clear I don't like a mess on my table I tend to keep my space as free as possible*

*Let me ask you this if there is a park and if you want to occupy a space. ..*

*When I occupy such an open space I don't mind being seen. But I don't like be the centre of everyone's attention so probably I would choose a place under tree or a bench or a sunny area and just if it has a beautiful view. Like you can see people lying on the grass as long as there is a beautiful perspective in the front.*

#### **TASK 5 Discussions**

*I choose this one as my favourite which is next to the town hall. Favourite place to visit in the city, I feel comfortable in this part it is more quiet and I feel like I have my own space here.*

*Though it's so open?*

*Yeah. I don't mind open spaces. But it is more private somehow as it is like, the place is for people and not cars or anything...*

*okay..*

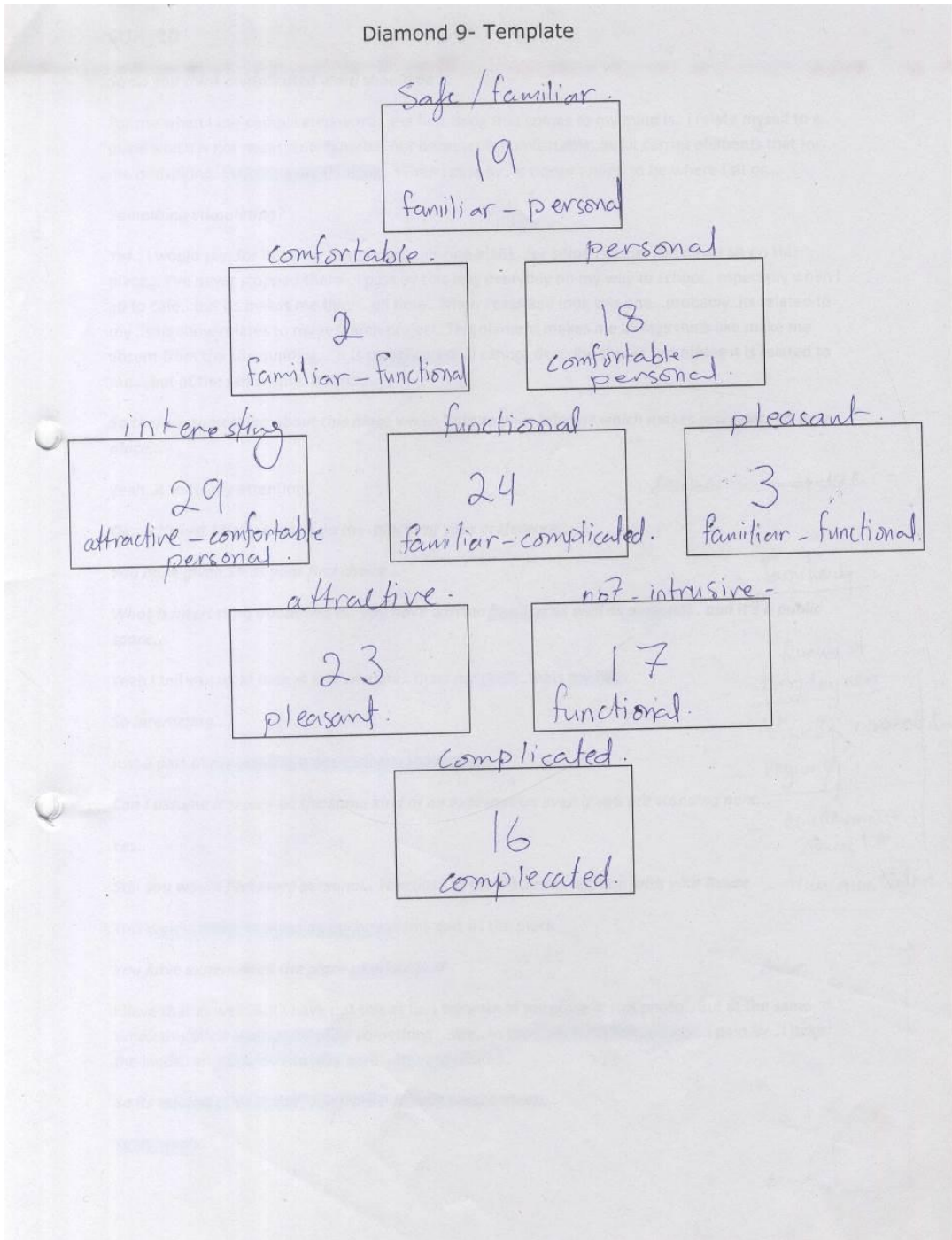
*So hmmm spaces here relate to just because I study there. And nothing more but this space i feel I already belong there...*

*So what is it you would add?*

*More activities Because it's always empty hmmm some concerts during the summer some stage where people can perform.*

**Participant 11**

P11	Iranian
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*(Participant randomly starts to talk looking into the wordlist provided)*

*Sometimes complicated might also mean interesting I think, For me when I use complicated word the first thing that comes to my mind is I relate myself to a place which is not necessarily familiar, not necessarily comfortable but it carries elements that for me is inspiring. Evocating my thinking. When I pass by it doesn't need to be where I sit or spend more time*

*Something stimulating?*

*Yes I would say. For instance this image16.for some reason I've never sit on this place. I've never stopped there I pass by this way everyday on my way to school especially when I go to café but its makes me think all time. when I pass and look this one probably Its related to my research project. This element makes me always think like make Im absent from the surrounding it is complicated i cannot describe this as something it is related to me but at the same time I am connected to it.*

*So there is something about this place which links to your interest which makes you relate to your place...*

*Yeah it shifts my attention*

### **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Ok let's just briefly discuss on the places that you have ranked, You have given image 19 as your first choice,*

*I will tell you what. Look at this window (in the picture) that's my place that's my flat. This is a view which I see every day I get from inside my house, this part of the place*

*Can I assume it would be the same kind of an explanation even if you are standing here...*

*Yes.*

*Still you would feel more personal ?because of the distance relation with your house*

*This is view which I get inside my house, exactly this part of the place*

*You have experienced the place physically?*

*I have that as well. I have put this as first because of my place in this photo. But at the same time this place is absolutely like something which I'm connected to in the daily basis I would say, I pass by, I take my kids there and they love to play here. I identify myself with this place mainly to how it is connected to my daily life from different perspectives.*

*Image 16, you have written Familiar and Functional?*

*Because this is near my place, every kind of shopping, transportation I take I have to pass by this go to Costa around the corner it is something I like. My circulation area I would say very fundamental*

*one which I need it. I absolutely feel like I'm familiar with it all the time it more like a transactional area..*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*Shall I consider as empty like no building ?*

*Yes*

*Can I add building?*

*Yes*

*A coffee area with seats... self service or probably even like a proper coffee shop or a small van. It should be pedestrian as its safe and make me relaxed*

*Does choosing coffee shop is synonymous for having a break? Or just a pause?*

*Hmmm well. Coffee for me is everything. It is symbol for many things It's like I have personal relationship with the coffee.*

*Addict? (smiling).. maybe we should not use it as its a negative word?*

*I would say yes. But in a positive way.. because I'm not drinking coffee all the day but this coffee that I need it at a certain time of the day I certainly need it.*

*A coffee area in a public space makes me feel good; it makes public space for me a better place... or maybe some kind of a social thing. Maybe I cannot see myself sitting in a public space doing nothing, holding a cup is doing something, Gives me a reason to sit in a public space. [P11]*

*Why do you think you cannot sit not doing anything? [I]*

*Probably whenever I sit without doing anything, it's just, hmmm well coffee for me is everything. It is a symbol for many things its like I have a personal relationship with the coffee... I would say [smiling]. Just that it makes me feel good all the time[laughing]*

*So this a kind of set up in any corner of the world you would relate yourself.?*

*Yeah it should be beautiful as well picturesque...*

*Ok if it's a personal space, one thing which is important is Colour.*

*Concept of colour are you saying as it has a relation to your cultural background or Is it generally based on your personal choice ?*

*Hmmmm I mean not using colour in such a way that I will colour my whole place but its something just a kind of material that makes me feel comfortable. It might not be the colour itself or something like fabric or textile or that makes me comfortable. It would make me feel I'm in my place. Because its mine, so its peaceful*

*any other thing? So any place with this you would identify yourself with?*

*not necessarily I depends on the place itself if it already say personal as you said then adding this kind of element will make it more mine. And a corner to pray if it's like here an office not home. But office for me is to use and I have access to it I would prefer prayer area to be here it makes it feel like more like a comfortable.*

*So the concept of safety become default?*

*Yes. I don't want to construct safety and security for myself. I would not choose to be in a place where I need to enhance my safety and security.*

*Okay..*

*hmmm. its very difficult to think about in a default setting.*

*Yes it is a space which is essential for student life but there's some discomfort, as the space is largely for movement, if it has. hmmm. I think it should have more elements like activities or seating areas or some kind of enclosure properly*

*As you are saying if it had been brighter and better ambience this image would have been in your higher order of ranking?*

*Probably. If it would been bright if I go there used the space and I will feel comfortable then I would gradually engage with the place and then would ranked higher*

*But at least I will feel comfortable passing by.*

*So you will not sit there? Sorry to interrupt you said it is essential for student's life...?*

*It is for movement if it has like more elements like activities or seating areas, or some kind of like enclosing properly I would sit in but if it is bright I will still pass by only but feel better.*

Participant 12

P12	Dutch
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Diamond 9- Template

Confort.  
~~Attractive.~~  
functional.

18

Pleasant.  
Public

12

Interesting  
Pleasant.  
Attractive.

15

Public (Genic)  
Pleasant  
Interesting.

29

Public (semi).  
Pleasant

26

Public  
Confortable.

23

functional.  
Familiar.

20

functional.  
Familiar.

14

Unattractive.  
familiar.  
~~functional.~~

9.

1 Familiar.  
Interesting.  
~~Safe.~~ Confortable  
Safe.  
functional.  
Pleasant.  
Attractive.  
Personal.  
9. Simple.

9  
1. 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 24, 23, 29.

## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Could you please explain your top ranked picture 18, how do you identify yourself with this place.*

*it more with the context I identify myself with because the road it leads to the Buddhist centre and looks upto walkley where my friend lives so I do know [thinking] yeah it's the vision of the arts tower that draws you into the arts tower...*

*Is there any picture where you have written familiar..?*

*yes.*

*why you did not add here?*

*It's not that the word comes to my mind, it's also partly because its more than familiar and beyond the stage of familiar and it gives comfort. I think. it is familiar in a general sense and I feel if something is very comfortable then you have passed beyond that point*

*but the first thing you need is to be familiar...*

*What do you want tell about this steps picture?*

*yes simple steps it connects to the park which is a pleasant place, it's nice escape place and I like it as it leads on to another event.*

*Can I assume that any transition place which leads to a such interesting/ relaxing or a pleasant environment would definitely more closer to you..?*

*Yeah.. it's in my last answer. .it may not be very nice but if its comfortable I would feel closer to that place. But this place is not comfortable actually, it lead in to the thoughts that I am going home at the end of the day..*

*What about this low ranked image 9?*

*I don't use the bus tops but I do pass by them as this is one of the route I take to go home and probably few times a week and this is why I choose this image*

*Though you just pass by you still identify yourself with the place...?*

*yes its not a very attractive place and the reason mainly is partly because I walk past so many times and I don't feel unsafe anymore, its functional and i know it's there.*

*Can I also assume it that you think it more like a background for your everyday life?*

*I think these are landmarks, I did some cognitive exercise and they said to remember things from work to home these would be one of the landmarks. I think landmarks on your way probably will help us know where you are but for me just seeing the bus stop is more like I have reached this stage of the travel. It's definitely more a landmark then a mere background.*

*Can you please tell something on the Image20?*

*Yeah. Walking down as I am moving to the IC, sometimes I walk past this space. Even when the space is not large enough for people to gather, there are quite a lot of instances where students just stop by and have a chat. I think it's the stairs, the separation of the space from the street. it's not always busy but definitely it feels it's a part of the arts tower platform. its the other one as well..*

*There are quite a lots of picture of western park which have occupied the middle order, could you please explain your reasons?*

*For me, I don't know I get a lot of ego from my work so my self is embedded in what I am as a student, professional. So it take a higher priority in my life compared to other places...because my work is my context..*

*have you used this space ?*

*Never, but I do think its nice to see people using it but never felt compelled to sit there I would rather go the park instead...*

*Any place you would choose to add or remove things which would impact your ranking..?*

*I think generally in lots of cases it lacks the moment of standing still lots of them. Image 12 is fine, 15 is fine but most of the places looks like moment of capturing people.. movement..*

*I would say that in image 26 space could have been bigger in the front of the union, places to sit.. conglomerate, which can be used as a more social space now its actually more a transition space..*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*What do I want in a public space? hmmm...What I think. to relate myself is its the context, to have partly people. but people are actually least important. It's the familiarity of the buildings and the surroundings. knowing that there is something that I would know, I could see something and recognise this is in public urban space. yeah, it's the context then I can actually go and engage. it's the pavement, rocks, trees which gives a sense of framework..*

*You mean to say it's more if a place helps you to locate yourself there?*

*Yes through locating it gives a sense of comfort. Its gives myself an identity within it, am I familiar? am I part of the context? Am I an alien in this context?*

*Okay*

*I do very little to enhance my personal space. Once all gets into place its quite hmmm. I don't know what I do, you do probably bring in things, like people do bring in picture. I don't know, what do I do..?... hmmm.. it's more like working my space work, I place some markers like the position of my chair. But these are not obvious markers. i definitely would like to train my own way I would definitely sense if there are any changes in my place.*

*is this something related to marking your own territory?*

*yes it is to make people know its owned, yeah but in a very subtle way. I would not put anything obvious to show its my space, its more subtle things so when I come in i don't need to do too much.. it's a way to create familiarity and routine. Those would be my ownership markers but they are not materialistic. People do say that when I live in one my house lot of them where empty. I have never been keen on visual inputs.*

*more minimalistic?*

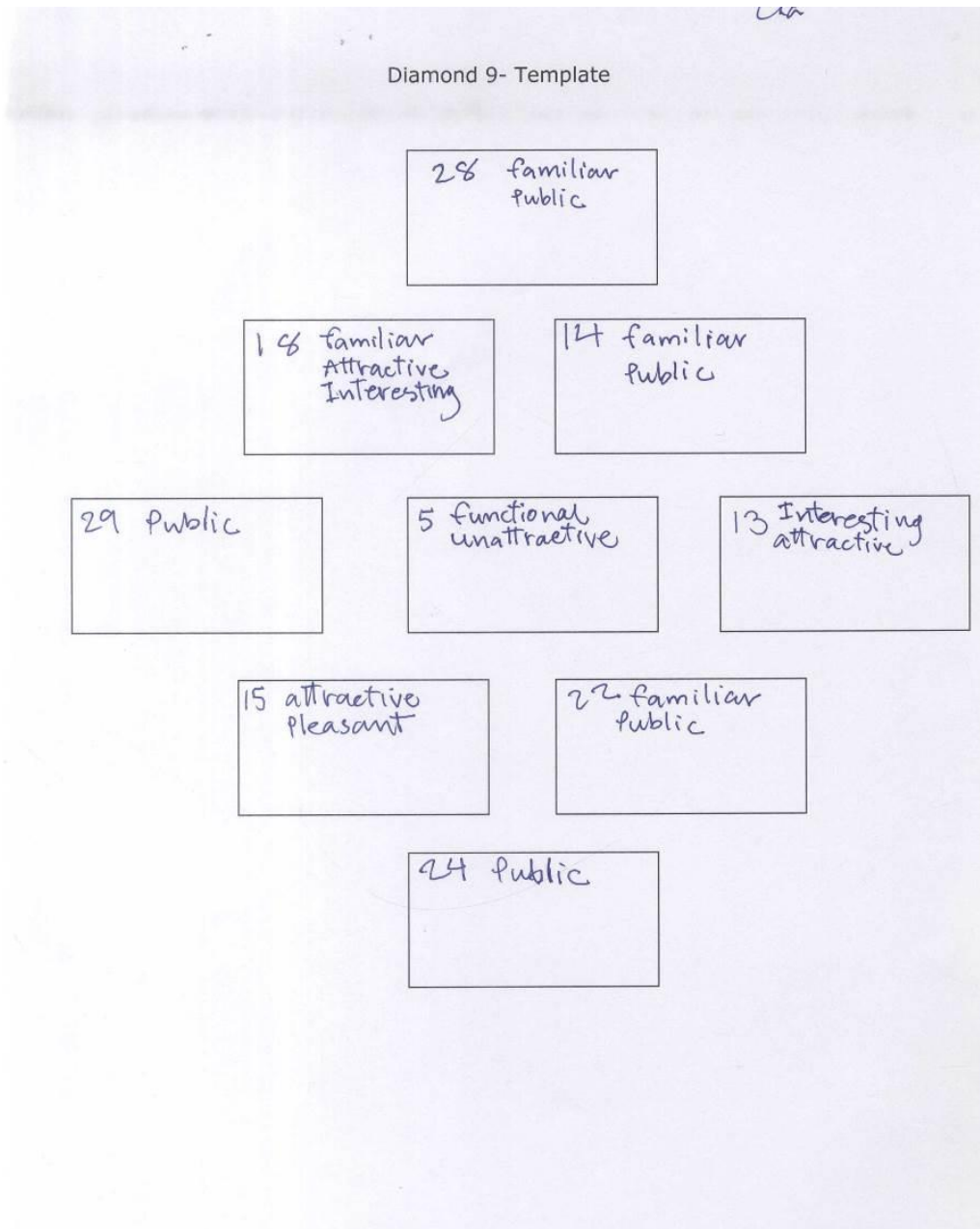
*it's not minimalistic. I don't want clutter. I'm not that clung to smaller things as it doesn't represent who I am. so yeah Probably here in this space, my book. its my little markers and I would say I have very little pictures as well. I'm quite OCD about it (smiling) if there is a shift I can notice it.*

*what do you think about the aspect that people bring objects from their native place?*

*yes I too bring something. I do in terms of ways of working. I bring in terms of my knowledge. how I approach people, how i do things so its once again what I do it's not in a materialistic way. I do understand you bring your markers what you feel is home. Spatially it means different things for different people.*

**Participant 13**

P13	Thai
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*You have written lots of familiar words to everything but actually when you ranked them familiarity has not been the criteria for you in your ranking could you please explain that?[1]*

*I think, I tend to see view related to these place mainly due to my familiarity [P4]*

*OK, Could you explain your reasons for how you ranking of Image 28 higher?*

*Every day I pass by this place.*

*But I think there are other places also that you pass by every day, but why did you opt for 28 instead.*

*Yeah.. maybe its nearer to my home, yeah probably I see more related to that aspect of the place being closer to my home.*

*Could you explain why you have written 'public' for this place. ?*

*Yeah it's on the street on the public space..*

*there are even other participants who felts this place is 'interesting' ..*

*actually i don't associate this junction to 'safety' as there are no pedestrian lights here....*

*although it's a traffic junction, I have seen so many students sitting here waiting and using this space actively*

*yes sometime I too have some people sitting maybe more in summer*

*What about this Image 18?*

*Yeah.. I think it's more about arts tower, again a place that I use every day and its also the building which is attractive*

*so any place you have used as place as a part of everyday you relate yourself more?*

*Yes in this image Arts tower just catches my eyes.*

*Can you explain something about this image 24?*

*yeah sometimes i walk past that place but I see its quite open and public*

*so the reason you have chosen it is that you pass by it*

*It's actually for the same reason as of Image 22.*

*But you have ranked that higher than this why is that?*

*Probably maybe, that place has more activities and this has just the new shop. but what is important for me is that, I think I would normally identify myself with places that are in areas around my house and university than city centre.*

*even though if the building are attractive in city centre you tend to choose a more simple areas?*

*yes, because in a week I go to city centre just once so those place don't impact me much. . so that why I don't identify myself with such places..*

*So can we say it also because that you have not visited city often ?.. or these places relate more to home and work? or is it both..*

*I think its both but relating to home and work is a routine and hence stronger.*

*So all the places fall into the domain of your everyday life?*

*Yes..part of my life which might be simple but essential*

*it's a nice place still you have not ranked it higher.. ?*

*Usually I don't go there, I mean the top ranked ones is more because of my familiarity and yes.. because I seldom go there but its attractive, sometimes I sit in western bank library and I look at this space. So only I am associated with the place more closely, I mean visiting it, experiencing it I can start to identify with the place not just because its attractive.*

*Could you please tell what 'comfort' means to you?*

*A comfortable place is a place that I can feel I can stay without thinking too much( laughing),no need to worry about people around me... or...I can feel spontaneous, do things without being very conscious. It may also depend on the types of people around me. for example I will feel comfortable because of my colleagues around me or my family..*

*You mean to say, in such an occasion you will even be more comfortable than in a park?*

*Park is different, for instance its pleasant than here but for e.g. if I stand in the middle of that area I would not feel comfortable than here..*

*I would want to add people to this place which will make it lively as it already looks cold and very gloomy*

*so do you don't mind the place without people if the weather is good?..*

*no I think some people should be there to make place feel nice*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*( participant drawing and explaining ) Horizon appears and. this is my legs, I'm sitting and watching the other side and hmmm this is some plants climbers and semi enclosed structures or may be a kind of frame. the main thing is it's good to have some kind of private space in a public space, so that I can observe comfortably the people, activities and nature.*

*so any place which has this kind of ambience you can relate yourself to such place?*

*maybe no because there could be some more factors that might make me uncomfortable.. for example if people happen to be criminals like (laughing), in general spatially this is the space I could relate myself to...*

*If it's going to be my personal space, Hmmm, ok it's a window and I think my personal space of course should be private but at the same time I can have some relation to outside when I want to choose and there are especially some objects or things that that belong to me or that have some memory attached to myself.*

*You mean to say your native experiences or memories attached to that?*

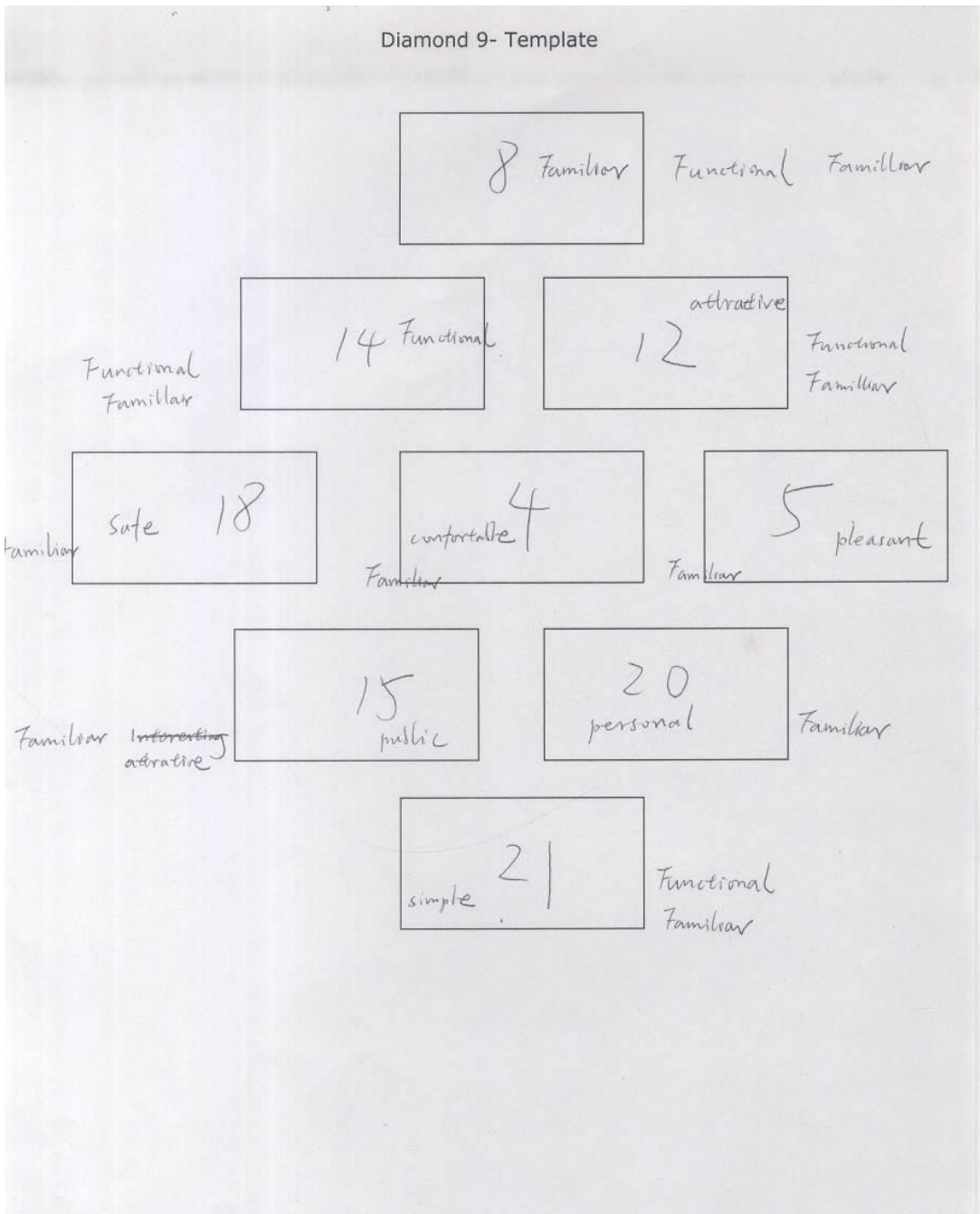
*no I mean to say more generally, anything relating to my personal experiences.*

*so personal objects for you play an important aspect in identifying yourself with that place?*

*yeah I think such objects they increase the level of feeling attached or to identify with the place, since we are talking about personal space first thing it comes to my mind is home*

**Participant 14**

P14	Chinese
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## **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*Could you please explain the reasons for the image you had ranked first?*

*Yes, every time I need to go the tennis club, I use these steps and I feel quite good with these steps when I go there I'm always in a good mood.. and I'm familiar with the place because of my tennis classes and I like to take this way to go to play*

*can I assume that it is more about the space which this place is leading you together than the steps itself that is the reason for your choice ?*

*yes may be its not the steps but it's about the transition to the space, yeah*

*Also what is interesting in your ranking of images is that the western park has been ranked quite low? Could you please explain this*

*I think it's not so related to me as I haven't gone there very often and even if I go there I had just passed by and not purposely been there. Its attractive but that's all nothing else.*

*so any place for you to identify or relate yourself with, you have to experience it. regardless of how beautiful the place is, it's the direct experience that matters?*

*I think it should be familiar for me, the I should use it quite often, then comes the safety because I walk through some areas which are not safe then I do not relate it to myself at all. I don't like that place so I will not be familiar with it.*

*so actually familiarity will not be the sole criteria for your to relate to a place? you need to pass through the phase of familiarity ?*

*hmmm... the place have to be familiar to me to relate myself with me but also it should be a pleasant place... I don't think I can relate to any place which I'm not familiar with. I think there are some place which are like beautiful countryside cottages, which is so lovely that I might relate myself to...*

*Could you explain about Image 14?*

*This I think it's for the same reason, I just like these steps.*

*So its again because of the tennis club?*

*Yes (laughing) other pictures are everyday spaces.. there are no pictures which have stunning views, so I take the pictures which I relate to my activities which I like.*

*Could you explain the lowest ranked picture?*

*I chose this picture because I use to go there for shopping and also I'm familiar with the place and it's kind of functional so I chose this one...*

*What about Image 15?*

*it's a park, it's just a nice place. sometimes I pass through this bridge so I put it before this..*

*this picture You have written personal for this?*

*I'm very familiar with the place... if I had not chosen this course I would have chosen a course in that building something like biologist etc. I pass-through the building almost every day. I'm not familiar with the inside of the building just outside..*

*It's important for as space to be functional as it determine whether Il be happy or not, or else it's frustrating, actually maybe I should also say safety and attractiveness is important.*

*You are not so keen about the visual appeal of the place compared t the basic needs?*

*Well even for visual appeal, it can't be completely horrible, it has to be in some levels of acceptability..*

*could you please explain what do you mean by public..?*

*I think almost all these pictures are public and I can't have any sense of private and personal feeling in these pictures..*

*so public is openness for you?*

*it's a place with lots of people and activities and not owned by anyone...*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*(Sketching)A tree in citycenter square, not having a modern and high-rise building but have a human scale to it... an ice cream van.. seating area.. for other people to just sit and watch... so..yeah.. human scale buildings...and a lot of people as it's a popular place...*

*where do you locate yourself in this context?*

*maybe I will just pass by or consider myself approaching...*

*that's interesting, you give a perfect setting which is enjoyable but you will be very much happy to just passby it?*

*Hmmm, I may just sit for a while but I think this kind of place is just for me but I cannot see I could do anything in this place what do you think this people will do in this kind of place?*

*they might just sit and watch?*

*I don't want to do that. I would just want to pass by and enjoy the surrounding environment and context.*

*Ok so is this place particular to Sheffield?*

*Yes I think Sheffield has a very strong effect when I am drawing this have seen such scenes think its a very common in Europe small urban squares but it's not common in China.*

*If I'm going to draw a personal space where I would identify myself with will be[...]I take it to be my room, I like attic space but I can't draw an attic in 3d.*

*it's okay even if you draw a 2d drawing.*

*what do you prefer an attic?*

*because attic is the most quite room in the house and I would like it to be quite.. hmmm. here is the window.I know no one will live upstairs and I will not hear any steps.I used to live in a place where someone was annoying always moving and making noise. Now I'm living in a quiet place, so first its the quite space and far from the maddening crowd.*

*What about your connectedness to outside?*

*I think I would want to have a quiet street with some roadside plantings, very quiet street.*

*so any in any place if it has this setting can you relate yourself to?*

*I just want to have things simple. Coz it's easy to maintain. If I have to add something I would have some plant. I don't need much decoration, I would just need it to be white because i think it's very normal to use white wall, even if I had an option I would choose white as it looks clean and I think red or orange makes you excited and cannot give a sense of calmness but light blue or green will look like cheap old room so I prefer it to be white.*

#### **TASK 5 Discussions**

*If I want to add something, I would choose this one, this one is ugly I chose this because Im familiar with the place if there are some plantings here, makes it more livelier,I would move it to a higher position.*

**Participant 15**

P15	Iranian
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19  
pleasant  
Attractive

11  
intresting

7  
Attractive

15  
pleasant  
familiar

18  
familiar

29  
interesting

22  
familiar  
functional

12  
familiar  
simple

23  
familiar  
intresting



### **TASK 1 & 2 Discussions**

*I like those kinds of places which has different forms of water elements and that attracts me..*

*Could explain a bit more on Image 7 which you had ranked higher?*

*Yeah its really natural, the kind of things that natural like it and also maybe because Ive seen it several times, it's very familiar but more than that its attractive for me.*

*What about Image 22?you have written familiar and functional,could you explain more on that?*

*it's a place I use quite often, I like this as a bridge which relates to student union, academic buildings and its familiar as well..*

*What role does the activities in the place influence your experience?*

*hmmm.. yes I do like the activities, But I always liked these kind of bridges which connects places. As it is in the city centre, it's very active all the time and I can see different things, different types of buildings and I like being there.*

*Why have you ranked Image 22 is higher than other?*

*Maybe I like the function of the places, linking places.*

*why do like such spaces if you could just think and tell me..*

*these are have interesting pathways and so many areas it connects this makes it interesting so I like that*

*you have written simple for the steps image?*

*Although its special to me, the place is simple. I have many memories attached to the place and also its between two important places. it's something because of the way, it's located I relate to this place.*

### **TASK 3 & 4 Discussions**

*(Sketching)One of the things I like in public spaces is having water, hmmm... it doesn't matter in which context but it must be an open space. for example if I take a plaza I would like have some.. the surface water elements it can be like a pool but it should be more like a surface most important thing is and more important is that we should be able to watch it and almost feel it. I should be able to touch it and some seating nearby water. Also I would like to have a bridge to cross the water as well and are some places where you can make some place for group interaction which has a sense of enclosure, I mean it can be a bit enclosed.*

*Is the enclosure for privacy?*

*both for physical comfort and privacy. This allows to also see people going and coming but at the same time I can have my own space.*

*What about greenery?*

*Yes, having some would be great especially trees, I was thinking for example it can be a combination of green spaces and water.*

*What about if it's a personal space?*

*If I consider a new space for myself which I'm going to occupy. I will have something which has some memories attached to it say some small objects. for e.g. it might be something which depends on the space but I can bring some pictures so that it reminds me something which is pleasant and also the things that I work with, I like to have them in that place. For eg if it is in my office space, I like to have my pens and different things and if it's a living area for example I would like to put nice dishes and art objects, all the things I use I would want to have them around me.*

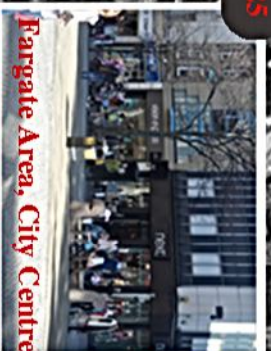
*So any place which have such things you could relate to that place?*

*Yes but in addition I like to see outside as well. it depends, when you are in a closed space and you can't see anywhere outside, I don't have a good feeling. I like to have a feeling that I'm not isolated in that place, I prefer to be in a corner if not I will try to put something and create a sense of enclosure.*

#### **TASK 5 Discussions**

*What will you add or delete in the images you had chosen to make yourself identify with the place more?*

*I would like to have some seats if the texture of this flooring is more natural because everything around is more natural and suddenly there is a hard kind of texture in the road so if the texture could match the surroundings, it feels nice to be a part of this environment.*



MAP SHOWING THE VARIOUS INCIDENTAL SPACES USED IN THE MAIN CASE STUDY  
The total number of 30 images are numbered as used in the interview with the participants