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Memory Association in Place Making: A review

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Abstract

People experience present world that is causally connected physically and mentally with past events and objects. This study is to present a synthesis of literature studies from 1990 to 2010 with relation to memory association in place making. Aspects taken into consideration include methodological issue and factor used within the city centre from the person memory and perceptions, followed by the associations between place and memory. In summary, one's memory and perception of the environment are shaped by three components; role of event, history and monument remembrance of a place that enables us to perceive a place through memory association.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an escalating of debate in the build environment regarding the concept of 'place', 'memory' and 'identity' particularly when the memory are constantly under the threat of rapid transformation and revised, where spatial identities and place meanings are always given a new face. Since the mid-1990s especially in Asian countries, the enthusiastic to join the adulthood of urbanisation in the globalisation era by referring to western countries as a role model does not do any justice to the country as a whole. According to Tay and Goh (2003) in Chang (2005), 'Why is it that many planners in Asia still look to the West for ideas and standard in urban design, planning and architecture while they speak of an Asian identity, Asian democracy and Asian way?' Asian countries are known by their complex and unique in geography and place value or 'local culture' – politics, race, caste, religion, ritual

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structures and gender issues. Most of the Asian countries currently are facing the same dilemma while competing to mark their spot in the eyes of the world; not only jeopardizing in erasing their past memory (heritage) but at the same time are loosing their 'Asianess' identity along the process.

Popular believed that identity is not easy to create; it may be either accidentally or purposely created and some may take a longer time realize or to acknowledge the identity in a place. According to Mohamad (1998) cited in Norsidah (2009), the weakening or loss of identity is caused by the inconsistent concepts of planning and development together with the alteration of places. As much as place identity linked to meanings, perception and memory held by the people in relationship with the environment, it also can weakens the depth of meaning, attachment and diversity of place experience and memory if we loss the identity. This means the loss of identity is also a loss of sense of place. Without the sense of place, one may not have any emotional feelings of attachments or any physical urgency to take care of a place that Relph (1976) described as the diminishing of place significance or placelessness. This also leads to the understanding of to secure the identity is to ensure continuity in the physical and memory (social) held by the people.

It is often assumed that the relationship between 'memory', 'identity' and 'nation' operate in a linear way. Memory becomes a collective entity, which binds people together under a shared identity and which are usually kept alive through group interactions and acts of remembrance. The persistence of the nation past memory are transmission from generation to the next and 'no memory, no identity; no identity, no nation', Smith cited from Chang (2005). That is why past memory is extremely influential in safe guard the nation identity.

1.1. Aim and objectives

This paper presents a synthesis of studies from 1990 to 2012 on the memory association in place making. The aim of this paper is to understand the importance to taking into consideration of memories in place making and the factors that influence the association. The main questions addressed in this paper is why memory association is significant and worth to consider in place making? Sub questions been introduced and divided into two parts in order to investigate further on this topic. Firstly, relating to urban design, how does memory association play its role in contributing to formation of a place? And what are the types of space or places design with memory association? These two questions can be determine by exploring the roles of memory association in place making and also by investigating the types of space or places designed with memory association. Secondly, to know the importance of memory association in place making is also by understanding the perceptual aspect of the users. Three questions been formed; a) what are the meanings or perceptions of memory association to people, b) how do people react to space or places designed based from memory association. These two questions can be verified by recognize meanings amongst people that associating their memory in space and places. Lastly, question c) how does the loss of space or places that designed based from memory association affected the people will be investigate by distinguish meaning of space and places with people whose these places has been replaced with new spaces.

1.2. Memory and collective memory

As Nuala (2004) remarks, memory is the diffusion and transformation of meaning across time and space is central both to the rituals of everyday life and to the special moments of remembrance associated with birth, death and other important events in personal and collective histories. Memory as recollection, remembering, and representation is essential in the mapping of significant historical moments and in the expression of personal identity. Memory is the mental capacity of retaining and reviving facts, events,

impression or recalling and recognizing previous experiences. Memories help us preserve past events (Boyer (2009) in Oloonabadi and Ardakani (2011)). When an event happens and some time elapses from it, what remains in our mind is the space of the events (Lim, 2000). According to Mowla (2004), we remember spaces by having walked around them, by having been in them. This feeling of familiarity with a space creates a sense of place. On the other hand, if our experience of space does not meet our pre-conceived ideas or expectations then it feels like we have not been in 'place'.

Memory is also a signifier of a place, it could be individual or community based. One's memory image is unique and individual. The image giving a sense of place is related to our physical senses but it is limited. Physically, someone may find mud or a muddy place as unpleasant and unhygienic but for me for example, *the smell of mud will always remind author of her childhood journey to school in Kedah when she was a kid in a primary school cycling along the paddy field and the sense of freedom and happiness she had during her time there*. Some can conceptualize memory as our fingerprint of a place; it is our unique memory and individual conception. Places become filled with the residue of reminiscences, sedimentation of image and memory, the intimate layering of memory over memory by Proust (1981) in Mowla (2004). The memory may be either individual or collective. Our memory-images of space are formed by the remembrances of our individual or personal experience of spaces. Collective memory is a series of events collectively remembered by a group of people who share it and involve themselves in shaping it. The greater the number of the people remembering the event, the memory finds a collective feature (Lewicka, 2008).

1.3. Place memory

Why do we need a sense of place? We usually relate to place physically and mentally; both of these relationships are very important in our understanding of place. Mentally as in memory is a process of recalling facts or experience. Memory association is very important in creating a sense of place. We experience our present world in a context that casually connected with past events and objects. According to Mowla (2004), area between and within an object is space that becomes a place when occupied by a person, thing or any other attributes and the remembrance of an event or events is a valuable identifier of space. There is some analogy between memory and place, it is like a tapestry, our personal and community histories and identities are interwoven with space and places. We point to places a personal memory labeling which marks them in our mind. In this way we might say that we need to remember in order to have an identity and a sense of place.

When does space become a place? Many referred to the hypothesis by Tuan (in Mowla, 2004) is *...When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place*. A sense of place comes from interactive association of physical, sensual and emotional responses with the site itself, events that occur there, and with people in that particular space. To be disoriented is to be lost in space. There are landmarks, buildings, spaces in the cities that act as signifiers of space (Mowla, 2002) or "urban reminders" (Lewicka, 2008). In cities around the world and some of the examples acting as signifiers are The Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, Central Parks in New York, Louvre in Paris, Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and so on. The sight of a building, monument or space tells us that we have gone wrong way and that we are no longer where we want to be. This is point of reference by default.

2. Methodology

Literature was selected from different disciplines including sociology, environmental geographies, environmental psychology, architecture and urban design. The Gateway to academic content system

(GACoS) is a computerized search system to search for documents and other academic information over the online database by the University of Tokyo. Other than this, Google scholar, Science Direct, JSTOR and Scopus also been used with certain keywords as a guideline: memory, collective memory, place making, perception, identity and attachment.

To narrow the search, papers selected are those published between 1990 and 2012 that included the theoretical, review, and empirical editorial both quantitative and qualitative. Literature was chosen to show the possibility of knowledge accessible about memory association in place making and the research conducted and the findings for future references. A more specific study was emphasis on literatures that addressed the relationship between memories towards the people especially in Asia and have case studies to measures the influence of memory in place making. The other aspects taken into consideration in reviews included approach, methodological issues and other related factors physically or socially that influenced the use of memory association.

3. Results and discussion

There are numerous researchers have highlighted the important role that spaces of commemoration play in reshaping the geographies of memory and unconsciousness: memory theory (Halbwachs, 1945), sites of memory (Nora, 1989), the thematic memory Boyer 1994; Huyssen 1995; Lowenthal 1996; Mowla, 2004, 2008; Crinson 2005; Legg 2005; Srivinas 2001; Till 2005, 2006; Alderman 2004; Rose 2008; Nuala 2004). Many scholars from both social sciences and humanities have contributed to the interdisciplinary field of ‘memory studies’.

Table 1. Studies in memory association in place making

Years	Theoretical	Authors	Research Concern
1989-1999	Collective memory, memory	Halbwachs, 1992 (1925), Nora, P. (1989, 1998), Huyssen (1995), Lowenthal (1996)	Classic studies concerns theoretical memory studies as well as analyze the social frameworks and sites of memory.
2000-2012	Urban memory	Crinson (2005), Boyer (1994), Huyssen (2003), Mowla (2004, 2008), Legg (2005), Srivinas (2001), Till (2005, 2006), Alderman (2004), Legg (2004, 2007), Rose (2008)	Studies concerns involve the relationship between memory and urban space, memorial landscape

3.1. Research undertaken memory association with place making

Since Maurice Halbwachs coined the term *mémoire collective* in 1925, many studies have stemmed from it. People relate themselves to places physically and mentally; both of these relations are fundamental to our understanding of places. According to Halbwachs, collective memory or social memory of the past among social group, united by class, religions or similarities that links the individuals in a group with common shared memories. Collective memory is a way in which social group can maintain its communal identity over time and it is through the social group that individuals recall these memories. Halbwachs 1992 (1925) and along with the more recent works of Nora (1989, 1998) are the classic sociologist studies that have heavily influenced how we theorize memory studies as well as analyze the social frameworks and sites of memory.

The breadth of the literature on collective memory is expanding each year; the theoretical and empirical scope of this work at times can be overwhelming. On the other hand, there is this one specific thematic concerns involves the relationship between memory and urban space and a variety of recent projects have explored calls “urban memory”. According to Crinson (2005), “urban memory” (also see Boyer 1994; Huyssen 2003; Mowla, 2004, 2008; Legg 2005; Srinivas 2001; Till 2005, 2006), cities serve as powerful symbols and repositories of memory. As a place of memory, the city is a site for both symbolic control and symbolic resistance.

3.2. Factors that influence memory association with place making

The influence factors of memory association with place making can be divided into three components: individual or group factors, physical factors and social factors (Table 2). This categorization was based on Traditional Symbols suggested by Mowla, (2004); there are unique interaction between individuals or in-group and their social and physical environments that may be influence memory association in place making. For example, in considering collective memory we usually neglect the plurality of voices that now make up a city, we tend to ignore immigrant peoples, women, religious groups and others. These groups have little or no representation in the public spaces of our cities, leaving instead well designed, gentrified ‘nodes’ which reference to the majority of the city and its people. Further more, landmarks, official history and biographies favor a small minority of elites, in prominent leadership and political roles, which may not appeal the commoners (Mowla, 1995).

Table 2. The influence factors of memory association in place making

Component (Individual/ Group)	Attributes	Descriptions
Physical factors	Demographic	Age, gender and ethnic
	Socioeconomic status	Length of residency, home ownership, employment status
	Location and scale (spatial attributes)	Building, monument
Social factors	Geographical perspectives	Availability and accessibility and exposure to history (public, marketable, infamous)
	Place experiences	Events & designed events: People experiences with places
		Setting: Permanent (memorial, ritual) or temporary (festival, fair)

Source: Mowla (2004)

3.2.1. Individual or group factors

Demographic factors such as age, gender, and ethnic are just basic information to describe a person at the same time maybe unique and play an important role in prescribing one’s attachment and ability to remember of certain things or events. Halbwachs, (1992, p.38) “*It is in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories*”. He thus argued that it is impossible for individuals to remember in any coherent and persistent way outside of their group contexts. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds, which to say there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. Group memberships provide the materials for memory and stimulate the individual into recalling particular events and into forgetting others. Groups can even produce memories in individuals of events that they never experienced in any direct sense. Home ownership or employment status on top of that length of residency may help in terms of reminiscence of past stories or quantity of events that gone through or passed through generation to the next by previous

family members. In general history of a place is a collective memory. It could be collective as well as individual but with the passage of time some collective memory out lasts individual memory in the urban place making.

3.2.2. *Physical factors*

The physical factors such as location whether in urban (city) or rural areas may make a difference. Hayden (1995) posits that ‘Story telling with the shapes of time uses the form of city...to connect the residents with urban landscape history and foster a strong sense of belonging’. The city is possibly the most exciting and accessible of all history’s textbooks. It is constantly changing. Names of areas and places with memory signifiers, gives place a natural identity e.g in Ahmad Basri & Shuhana Shamsuddin (2008), in Melaka, the goldsmiths can be found mainly on Jalan Tukang Emas (The Goldsmith Street) and many others such as Jalan Tukang Besi (Ironmonger Street). Such strong association between activities and the name of the street strengthens its identity and sense of place that clarifies the differences. The idea of using the city scale to remember is not new to the urban designers with commemorative structures as artefacts. Europeans tiptoe through their cities as museums because they are museums (Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993). Walking along the architectural promenades would not only link areas of a city but can be a memory walk down the lane where it stimulated by the historic monuments which represented the city’s past power and importance.

According to Kevin Lynch (1972), believer a remembrance of history based upon people and events rather than upon special places, claiming that people have a little desire in retaining old physical things, unless they are personal or familiar to them. It is the familiarity that people want to remember. If there is no personal association, over the time the memorials become less and less important and they potency diminishes. For example, we are likely to be able to remember the houses that our father and our grandfather lived in but the locations of the important historical figures are probably uninteresting and unknown to us. Preservation of history has no significance if the future has no connection with the past. Sentul Park in Malaysia may be considered a point of explaining the case, it was formerly known as Sentul works and housed one of the region's most sophisticated railway depots and collection of workshops during the British colonial era in what was then Malaya but many only know this place as a urban park after have been renovated and extended to form sales and project offices for YTL who are developing the site, a high tech communications centre, and of course Kuala Lumpur Performing Art Center (KLPAC) itself.

3.2.3. *Social factors*

The public history, seemingly little of its metropolitan history has been physically remembered in the city fabric – official heritage walks are not fascinating as they merely connected old buildings without memory association.

Next, the marketable history is the corporate sell-out of local history based on the perspective of middleclass architectural and planning professional. It’s has become increasingly prevalent over the last few decades. The contemporary arts of city building are derived from the perspective of middleclass architectural and planning professionals. Melaka; The Historical City is considered as a marketable history examples. Currently, apart from the remaining of the Portuguese and Dutch’s buildings being the main focus and events, more building reflecting architecture, sculptures and monuments from these two country been build. We must not forget not all Melaka’s past is built upon the sensation and achievements during the Portuguese or Dutch era thus the old town (consist of Chinese and Malay during the Melaka ‘s Malay Sultanate), of course are what brings many visitors to visit Melaka.

Then the infamous history are the histories that not displayed in the form of monuments or other recognized historic structure for example name of streets or other events that brings bad memory which

do not reflect the glory days are better forgotten. Pudu Prison, also known as Pudu Jail (Figure 1), was built in phases by the British colonial government between 1891 and 1895 and had been adorned with the world's longest mural at one point in its history in Malaysia can be considered as infamous history. A place where it housed criminals including drug offenders later in December 2012, the prison complex was completely demolished, with only the main gate and portion of the exterior wall still standing. There is a need to remember its infamous past. *To disregard history, to disregard memory, that which is owed to our ancestors is then to deny ourselves, it is to begin suicide* (Daly, 1862 in Mowla, 2004). It would be a misfortune if the fights, riots, and other things (Pudu Prison), which do not reflect the 'glory days', were forgotten. These things need to be remembered so that their importance is not diminished.



Fig. 1. Pudu Prison, Malaysia

Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>

Lastly the social factors based on events (history) and designed events. According to Bernard Tschumi (1994), considers that there is no architecture without action or without program, and that architecture importance resides in its ability to accelerate society's transformation through a careful put in order of spaces and events. He is not trying to look at idea of event in space and how it aids our understanding of place but he seeks to emphasize the experience over the physical. The event must be those situations or circumstances, which become so associated with a site in our mind that they become part of the memory of that space.

There are two aspect of event: a permanent event such as memorial that celebrated annually on that specific date and temporary event such as festival and fairs. Even if the event is no longer there it becomes linked by memory to the site; not so much link to a time but to a place e.g at Clarke Quay in Singapore, they managed to revived and resurrected the traditional Chinese opera and flea markets (or pasar malam) to attract visitors, Chang and Huang (2005). It is hoped that people who saw the event or involved in it will never again see the site as site; but as a place of memory and associate it with the events that took place. The things seen, heard, and smell during the festival are now synonymous with the place and the festival will always influence their association with the place.

There are two means of bringing the past into the present consciousness: by acting out and by remembering such as commemorative events (Eid-ul-Adha). This action is interdependent because in order to act out we need to remember. This considered ritual because been performed annually at special times and in special places. It is because the ritual occurs in place that the place become special. An event 'takes place'. Often the ritual will have a connection to the site where it occurs because previous event but

after time it is the ritual that remembered and associates with the site. The consistent regularity of event provides a space with such strong identity that the event becomes associated with it and that is memory. ,

There is now a different kind of design; the designed event. This is the design of experiences, of theatrical, multi-media, multi-sensory events in which architecture is just one tool among many and in which all the scruples dear to modern architects - truth to materials, abstraction, use of natural light, careful detailing and according to Mowla (2004) it can be divided into three categories; experience design, event association and events as pixie dust. A) Experience design, considered the use of event as a marketing tool as promoted by a company called Imagination. The idea behind 'brand experience' is that if you want to sell something you therefore have to engage your buyers not only by making them look at your product, but by making them live, think, breathe, eat, hear and smell it (Mowla, 2004). The theme park: the aim of stimulating as many senses, as quickly and as fully as possible, through as many media as possible. We suffer from experience overload. We come away disconnected from the event, have no association with the space, and wonder what has happened. The famous example is Disneyland (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. People can suffer from experience overload at theme parks

Source: <http://www.disneytouristblog.com/>

B) Event association, Bernard Tschumi (1994) claims that *Architecture is as much about the events that take place in spaces as the spaces themselves*. In many urban design proposals there seems to be an inherent desire to 'create' event and an unwillingness to realise that it needs to be engendered by a space. Labelling a space, stating its purpose and what will happen there, leads neither to an understanding of that space nor to a sense of place. Designating an area on a drawing as a 'cultural space' or 'performance area' without fully in view of the full potentials of that space is surely sad indeed, and brings out the selfish idea that architecture is the event rather the site of event. It is upsetting that designed space is so often separated from the reality of its use.

C) Events as pixie dust; mostly in Malaysia's municipality current trends, they claim that events, animation, sculpture, and illumination will improve the image and perception of public spaces by reinforcing a strong sense of place and by giving a clearly defined identity to the area but some may question on what grounds these conclusions were made. Aside from these extravagant and elaborate current design there seems to be no consideration of the actuality of day event, other than the desired atmosphere they hope to create at night. In terms of design proposals and decisions it would appear that there is little concern for the event even surrounding aspects were totally ignored. This is what happened to the spaces near Balai Nobat in Alor Setar, sculpture with neon lights filled the atmosphere, visitors not

behaving in proper manner were found where the municipality should be sensitive enough to realized that area is very near to Zahir's Mosque (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Neon's light giving different and inappropriate ambience to Balai Nobat, Alor Setar

Source: <http://zaharibb.com/tag/kedah/>

4. Conclusion

How is memory-association with place developed? The (manufactured) event can be seen as a somewhat artificial method of engendering a sense of place. Design can play an important role in the development of perceptual sense of place. However, manipulation of people's sense by event in a designed space does not necessarily engender a sense of place. For an event to be successful in this regard, memory association must be created. The event may not be significant or even successful, but it must have a relationship with place and memory. Without memory-association the event has no importance perceptually.

If we lose our sense of place we shall have lost something fundamental to our sense of self. Our perception of what space means to us stimulate a sense of place. Our sense of place comes from both a practical and deep interpretation of space relating to our cultural background and the influence of time upon our perception of that space. There is too much beautification and urban refinement rather than in the genuine nature of the city, its history, utilities and its potential. Vibrant, meaningful design should not direct people to do designated activities. Designers should not be surprised or offended if their designs are not used in the intended way. Sometimes, the design should not have to be extraordinary but it should at least make the users feel free and comfortable to explore and do anything they desire at that spaces. The use of the city fabric not just to portray history but the spaces can take on deeper meanings. This is not just history remembered in order to boost tourism or to be a tourist attraction but it is for the people, so that they do not forget and remain associated to the city. If there is no memory association with a place then there will not be any experience of place. Through events, ritualized and repetitive, a clear understanding of the history of the spaces around their meanings to us will be clearer. Place means nothing without association, without memory a place will just be another dull space.

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