

Patterns and Structures of Behavior and Space in the Human-Built Environment with an Approach to the Sense of Belonging

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Detailed abstract

Introduction

The intricate relationship between humans and their environment is a fundamental aspect of human existence, profoundly influencing individuals' well-being and sense of identity. A critical component of this relationship is the perception and experience of built spaces, which are not merely physical constructs but also receptacles of human experiences, emotions, and memories. Understanding the meaning of the built environment is the foundational issue in comprehending its role in people's lives. Any definition of the environment must consider its ecological aspects—what surrounds people, including the living organisms, social and cultural contexts. The primary concern of this research is to delve deeper into the concept of "place attachment" within human-made spaces, which represent a collection of human experiences across time and subject to change. This phenomenon is examined from phenomenological and environmental psychological perspectives to elucidate its intricate mechanisms and implications for human interaction with residential designs.

The environment, encompassing both the real, objective world and the phenomenological world, consciously or unconsciously shapes human behavioral patterns. As Lang (2012: 86) suggests, the environment, from one perspective, refers to the human-made space, which can be perceived as a bounded, tangible area for human beings. The way and quality of human perception of the surrounding environment largely determine the impact the environment has on individuals. This perception is built upon the knowledge and information individuals acquire regarding the forms, spaces, functions, and the apparent and intrinsic meanings of their surroundings. Consequently, human interaction with the environment leads to various psychological connections, ranging from feelings of identity, joy, sorrow, pride, humility, superiority, to alienation. Each of these emotions stems from a relationship rooted in cultural values, whether explicit or implicit within the environment (Scannell & Gifford, 2010: 38).

Environmental psychology is a complex field that explores the relationship between people and their surroundings. It offers a framework of perspectives and research that can significantly enhance our understanding of the reciprocal interactions between humans and their environment. By leveraging this knowledge, we can gain a better insight into these relationships. Designers, particularly those in urban planning and architecture, can utilize the principles of environmental psychology to create more

responsive and meaningful spaces. The environment plays a crucial role in shaping a person's sense of self and their emotional connection to a place, ultimately contributing to a strong "sense of place." This sense of place, characterized by deep emotional and cognitive bonds with specific locations, evolves over time and is influenced by various factors such as personal experiences, social interactions, and cultural meanings. It is a higher level of attachment that transforms a mere physical location into a meaningful place, fostering a sense of belonging and identity. This research aims to analyze these concepts within residential settings, shedding light on how design choices can cultivate a stronger sense of place attachment among inhabitants.

Materials and Methods

The present research adopts a descriptive-analytical approach with an applied objective. The methodology primarily relies on library-based information and extensive literature review. This qualitative research method involves a comprehensive survey of existing academic texts, including books, journal articles, and research papers relevant to environmental psychology, phenomenology, architecture, and urban design, with a specific focus on the concept of place attachment and its application in residential contexts.

The initial phase of the study involved a thorough examination of the nature of environmental psychology as a discipline. This included understanding its foundational theories, key concepts, and its various functional and environmental applications. The scope of this exploration covered different schools of thought within environmental psychology, identifying how psychological principles intersect with environmental design and human behavior in built settings. The aim was to establish a robust theoretical framework for analyzing the human-environment relationship, particularly concerning emotional and cognitive bonds with places.

Following the general overview of environmental psychology, the research specifically focused on the "place attachment" approach within the residential domain. This involved identifying and synthesizing literature that discusses how individuals form attachments to their homes and residential neighborhoods. The review encompassed studies on factors influencing place attachment, such as physical characteristics of dwellings and neighborhoods, social interactions, cultural significance, personal memories, and the perceived safety and comfort of a living space. The analysis aimed to discern recurring themes and theoretical models explaining the development and maintenance of place attachment in residential environments.

The final stage of the methodology involved recognizing the pivotal role of environmental psychology knowledge in the design of residential buildings, particularly when adopting a place attachment perspective. This included identifying design principles and strategies that have been shown to foster a stronger sense of belonging and identity among residents. The literature review sought to answer how architectural and urban design interventions can consciously contribute to creating environments that

facilitate deep emotional connections. This process involved critically evaluating case studies, theoretical propositions, and empirical findings to distil actionable insights for architects and urban planners. The synthesis of this information aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how design can intentionally enhance place attachment, thereby contributing to more meaningful and sustainable residential spaces.

Findings

The analysis of the literature revealed several key findings regarding the multifaceted nature of place attachment within human-made spaces, especially in residential settings. The findings coalesce around the understanding that place attachment is not merely a physical phenomenon but a complex interplay of psychological, social, cultural, and historical dimensions.

Firstly, the research underscores that human perception of the surrounding environment fundamentally shapes the degree and quality of environmental impact on individuals. This perception is profoundly influenced by the knowledge and information an individual possesses about the forms, spaces, functions, and the overt and covert meanings of their surroundings. This intellectual engagement with the environment consequently fosters various psychological connections, ranging from feelings of identity, joy, and sorrow to pride and alienation. These emotional responses are rooted in the relationship between individuals and the cultural values, both explicit and implicit, embedded within the environment. Therefore, the design of residential spaces must acknowledge and integrate these perceptual and emotional dimensions to facilitate positive and meaningful human-environment interactions.

Secondly, the study found that environmental psychology offers a crucial framework for understanding and enhancing the intricate relationship between people and their surroundings. This discipline provides insights into how design elements can influence human behavior, emotions, and ultimately, the formation of place attachment. The findings suggest that effective design strategies, informed by environmental psychological principles, can significantly contribute to creating spaces that evoke a strong sense of belonging and identity. This involves moving beyond purely functional considerations to embrace the symbolic, emotional, and social aspects of space. For instance, the creation of communal areas that foster social interaction, the incorporation of elements that resonate with cultural heritage, and the design of personalized spaces all contribute to strengthening place attachment.

Thirdly, the research highlights that place attachment is a gradual process that develops over time, contingent upon an individual's experiences and interactions within a given space. However, this attachment can also be abruptly disrupted by significant environmental changes or personal circumstances. Key factors found to accelerate and solidify place attachment include the physical characteristics of the built environment, the meanings these characteristics evoke, the environment's capacity to accommodate and support social activities, and its role in facilitating the formation of

positive social memories among residents. The presence of activity centers, support for special events and ceremonies, and the use of symbolic visual tools are all instrumental in fostering a sense of place. Furthermore, emphasizing natural features (topography) and cultural elements (historical backgrounds, prominent figures) within a residential design can significantly enhance inhabitants' sense of belonging.

Lastly, the study identified that place attachment transcends a mere cognitive or emotional connection; it embodies a symbolic relationship that imbues a place with shared emotional, affective, and cultural meanings. This symbolic dimension extends beyond individual experiences to encompass the cultural beliefs that connect people to their environment. Therefore, understanding and integrating these symbolic and cultural elements into residential design is paramount for creating deeply meaningful and resonant places. The findings suggest that designers should consider historical narratives, local customs, and community values to craft environments that not only meet functional needs but also nurture a profound sense of identity and belonging among their inhabitants.

Discussion and Conclusion

The exploration of place attachment within human-made spaces, particularly in residential contexts, reveals a profound and multifaceted interaction between individuals and their environment. This study, grounded in a descriptive-analytical approach utilizing extensive library resources, reaffirms that the built environment is far more than just a physical shell; it is an active participant in shaping human experience, emotions, and identity. The core finding is that a strong sense of place attachment is a culmination of integrated experiences across psychological, social, cultural, and historical dimensions, leading to an enhanced sense of self and collective identity.

The environment's impact on humans is mediated through perception, which in turn is informed by an individual's knowledge and understanding of their surroundings. This intellectual and sensory engagement fosters a range of psychological responses, from identification and joy to feelings of alienation. This insight critically informs architectural and urban design, suggesting that designers must consciously consider the intricate ways in which physical forms, spatial arrangements, and symbolic elements influence human cognition and emotion. The goal should be to create environments that not only fulfill functional requirements but also resonate deeply with the inhabitants' inner worlds, fostering a sense of belonging that transcends mere occupancy.

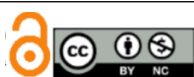
Environmental psychology serves as an indispensable discipline in navigating this complex human-environment nexus. Its principles offer a robust framework for understanding how design choices can cultivate deeper connections between people and places. The study emphasizes that fostering place attachment requires a holistic design strategy, one that integrates physical, social, and cultural considerations. This includes designing spaces that encourage social interaction, reflect cultural heritage, and allow for personal expression and memory-making. The "spirit of place," as defined by

Fritjof Steele, encapsulating the unique qualities that distinguish a location, becomes a tangible outcome of successful design that prioritizes human well-being and emotional connection.

Furthermore, the research highlights the dynamic and evolutionary nature of place attachment. While it forms gradually through accumulated experiences and interactions, it is also susceptible to disruption. Therefore, sustainable design practices must consider not only the initial creation of attachment but also its maintenance and reinforcement over time. This involves creating flexible, adaptable spaces that can evolve with the changing needs and memories of their inhabitants. The concept of "event" replacing "function" in architectural discourse, as suggested by the literature, underscores the importance of places as settings for meaningful human activities and experiences, which are crucial for cementing place attachment. The findings suggest that modern architecture often falls short in this regard compared to traditional designs, which inherently embodied a stronger sense of connection to history, community, and lived experience.

In conclusion, creating residential spaces that genuinely foster place attachment necessitates an empathetic and informed approach to design. Designers must move beyond purely aesthetic or functional concerns to embrace the profound psychological, social, and cultural dimensions that imbue a place with meaning. By understanding how perception, emotion, memory, and cultural values intersect within the built environment, architects and urban planners can craft spaces that not only serve their inhabitants but also enrich their lives, strengthen their identities, and contribute to a more cohesive and emotionally resonant community fabric. The ultimate goal is to design environments where individuals feel truly "at home," connected not just to a structure, but to a living, evolving place that reflects and supports their deepest human needs and aspirations.

Keywords: Place attachment, Human-made space, Environmental psychology, Phenomenology, Residential design, Sense of place, Identity.



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