

CULTURAL MEMORY FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING IN HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPES; AN EXISTING BUT A NEGLECTED DIMENSION

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ABSTRACT

One of our deepest needs as humans for achieving well-being is the sense of identity and belonging to our landscapes. These landscapes are more than what we see with our eyes, they are also what we interpret with our minds and what we value for intangible emotional reasons. They are considered to be the richest live records of our memories. Landscapes, are places that contribute greatly to the creation and retention of cultural memories. Cultural memory is a collective memory and is defined as “group of forms and media of cultural mnemonics through which the groups and cultures are creating their collective identity and the orientation within the era” (Isidora, 2015). It is a type of “Nationalist memory” so, when a collective or a cultural memory is valued, it is actually the identity of the place which has been valued, which enhances the people’s attachment to it. In this context this paper is a review on Cultural memory, Historic urban landscapes and well-being. The aim of the paper is to shed light on the existing relations between these three terms and how they could work together to reach psychosocial well-being and quality of life.

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Keywords: Cultural memory; Historic Urban landscapes (HUL); psychosocial well-being and Sense of place.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, human well-being research has garnered attention as an attempt to develop healthier and more comfortable environments. The concept of well-being has both physical (tangible) and psychosocial (intangible) aspects. The psychosocial elements of well-being contain intangible aspects such as emotions, previous experiences and the human psyche that can guide behaviour and attitudes within space. Memory is another intangible aspect of the psychosocial well-being. Memory can be defined as the storing of information about the past that helps us to preserve past events (P. Boyer, 2009). This paper asks the question do we really need our past? Further, is the past and our memories that are stored in historic urban landscapes important for our psychosocial well-being? To answer these questions this paper discusses the concepts of memory, cultural memory, historic urban landscapes and the meaning of psychosocial wellbeing before analysing the role that cultural memory has in the way we value our landscapes and achieve well-being.

1. MEMORY AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Memory is our mental capacity of retaining and reviving events as well as a mechanism for recalling our previous experiences which helps to preserve our past (M. C. Boyer, 1994). This raises a debate about whether we really

need our past and our memories. Simply yes. Our past is important to avoid high levels of uncertainty and change in our everyday lives as it gives us a degree of stability and structure (Lawson, 2001). We need the past to cope with the present context. Every object, every grouping, every view is intelligible, partly because we are already familiar with it, through our own experiences (Lowenthal, 1975).

Memory is orienting experience for the individual, strengthening the links between the past and the present and the links between different times and different spaces (Tiwari, 2010). Memory is a perpetual phenomenon, a bond between the present and the past. In contrast, history is just a representation of the past (Nora, 1989). When an event happens, a major part of what remains in our mind is the space or environment where the event took place. Memories are what make our lives meaningful, and make the temporal and spatial dimensions of our lives directional (Ardakani & Oloonabadi, 2011). It is a social phenomenon that lays between writing history and personal memory in a layered relationship (Kate Darian Smith, 1994). "When memory does not have a link to the lived experience, it is reduced to history or a fragmented re-construction of the past" (M. C. Boyer, 1994).

1.1 Cultural Memory

Memory is not apparent to all people except the group of people sharing it, and there are as many memories as there are groups, so memory is by nature multiple and sometimes specific; collective, plural, and other times individual (Nora, 1989). From that arises the issue of 'Collective memory' which 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 more the memory finds a collective feature" (Ardakani & Oloonabadi, 2011). The collective memory is a record of resemblances, similarities, that is kept alive by continuous reworking and transmission (Kate Darian Smith, 1994). "It originates from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life" (Li, 2010). Collective memory is counted as a repository of culture and because its social nature it is also known as 'Cultural memory', especially by American scholars who have used the term 'cultural memory' interchangeably with 'collective' memory (Kate Darian Smith, 1994).

Cultural memory is an external memory as well as a personal one, a memory of collectively, with no connection to a neural system. It is "cultural" because it can only exist through institutionalization and it is a "memory" because it is born through socialization (Cotoi, 2015). It is "group of forms and media of cultural mnemonics through which the groups and cultures are creating their collective identity and the orientation within the era" (Isidora, 2015).

Cultural memory is a universal phenomenon; it is a memory that standardizes and regulates community. It represents the many shifting histories and shared memories that exist between a sanctioned narrative of history and personal memory (Kate Darian Smith, 1994). This memory has a social nature that shows its dependence on urban spaces as a context for the events and incidents to happen (Ardakani & Oloonabadi, 2011), which shows that landscape is fundamental to create both memories and identities. According to Halbwachs (1925), "it would be very difficult to describe the event if one did not imagine the place", as "the past is mapped in the minds according to its most unforgettable places" (Aida, 2015).

Cultural memory is also a type of 'Nationalist memory' describes a geography of belonging, an identity captured in a specific landscape (Legg, 2004). Understanding the socio-environmental values of any society as well as the relationship between human and their environment can explain the construction of the idea of identity. This identity could then create a sense of place and a sense of belonging, not just through place physical qualities, but through psychosocial and emotional ones too (Cheshmehzangi & Heat, 2012). Therefore, when a collective or a cultural memory is valued, it is the identity of the place which has actually been valued, and that enhances attachment to the place.

2 LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY

What is landscape? Jackson (1984) in his reflections on landscape defined it to be "A portion of the earth's surface that can be comprehended at a glance." He saw landscape as 'A rich and beautiful book that is always open before us but we need to learn how to read it.' (Jackson, 1984).

Humans have complex psyches that are undoubtedly a conjunction of inbuilt inherent and learned behaviour (Lawson, 2001), such conjunction creates a relation with our spaces that humans tried to reach and express in their landscapes and that in turn creates different place identities. Therefore, strengthening the relationships of people with their places should be the planner's fundamental professional goal to enhance well-being. This concept of the relationship between people and their places can be illustrated through the work of Kevin Lynch (1981, 94), who stated that a crucial function of planning is to nourish psychosocial ties to places by pursuing the values of "community, continuity, health, well-functioning, security, warmth, and balance." There are three main emotional needs we expect designing the space help us to satisfy stimulation, security and identity. It might be seen as a strong desire to belong somewhere or a psychosocial need to be located in space (Lawson, 2001).

Landscapes have memory links and psychological bonds with different generations as well, the realization that what creates the rich cultural tapestry of life is the landscapes, traditions, and activities of ordinary people specifically through the recognition of the values people to their everyday places, sense of place and identity. In this context emerges the notion of an historic urban landscape.

2.1 Historic Urban Landscape

As defined by the UNESCO an historic urban landscape is “The urban area understood as a result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of historic centre or ensemble to include the broader urban context and setting”(Aysegul, 2016).

Landscape can therefore be seen as a cultural construct in which our sense of place and memories inhere. It works as “the medium through which multiple histories are simultaneously remembered and forgotten” (Raadik-Cottrell, 2010). It is a place to which a person becomes attached because of nostalgia and the memories to which it gives rise (Aida, 2015).

The landscape itself, is the richest historical record we possess (Taylor, 2008), since it contains more than bricks and mortar; it acts as a vessel containing family stories and community memories (Li, 2010).

Landscape and memory are inseparable since landscape is the nerve centre of our personal and collective memories. We see and make landscapes as a result of our beliefs and ideologies. Therefore Historic landscape is a cultural construct, a mirror of our memories encoded with meanings which can be read and explained (Taylor, 2008).

Cultural memories are place-specific and their remembrance and reproduction are connected with the place that the events which formed those memories have occurred. But memories of landscape are not always related to pleasure - they can be sometimes memories of loss, pain, social fracture and a lack of belonging, although the memory remains emotional (Taylor, 2008). Despite being of a personal attribute, sense of place is regarded as the output of a collective perception. Hence, place or landscape could contribute to the retention of collective memories (Ardakani & Oloonabadi, 2011).

3. PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING

Well-being is a growing area of research in multi-disciplinary sciences, and it has been always hard to define and measure due to its intangible construct (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). Shin and Johnson 1978 define wellbeing by stating that it is “a global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his own chosen criteria” and this definition remains in today’s literature (Rees, 2010; Zikmund, 2003). But this raises an important question, what is quality of life? World Health Organization defines quality of life as: “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person’s physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment” (WHO., 1997).

The above definition gives rise to the important term **psychosocial well-being**, which underscores the close connection between psychological aspects of our experience (e.g., our thoughts, emotions, and behaviour) and our wider social experience ((e.g., our relationships, traditions and culture). “Psychosocial well-being is a condition that includes a full range of what is good for a person such as; participating in a meaningful social role; feeling happy and hopeful; living according to good values, as locally defined; having positive social relations and a supportive environment; coping with challenges through the use of appropriate life skills; and having security, protection, and access to quality services” (INEE, 2017).

The multi-disciplinary construct of psychosocial well-being has caused it to be studied in a number of disparate research fields such as: Geography and Sociology. However, the field that is most relevant to this paper is; **Sense of place**.

3.1 Sense of place and its psychosocial construct

The term sense of place has been developed and widely theorized by a number of people (e.g., Relph 1976; Tuan 1980; Steele 1981; Eyles 1985; Jackson 1994 and Hay 1998). For the ancient Romans, the spirit of the place (genius loci) meant that places were safeguarded by the spirits. More recently, Edward Relph (2006) says ‘spirit of place’ has “inherent properties that lend identity to somewhere, can be distinguished from sense of place – the faculty by which that identity is perceived” and Yi Fu Tuan 1996 added “ place may said to have ‘spirit’ or ‘ personality’, but only human beings can have a sense of place” (Sense of place, health, and quality of life, 2008).

- One of the ways to address the need for human emotional well-being, and how it affects how a person will respond to a place is to understand the sense of place. In his book, *The Sense of Place*, Fritz Steel (1981) offered an excellent summary of the relational nature of sense of place (Cross, 2001):
- The relationship between people and environment is transactional: people take something (positive or negative) from and give or do things to the environment; these acts may alter the environment’s influence on the people.
- The concept of place should actually be psychological or interactional, not just physical. The environment is made up of a combination of physical and social features; the sense of place is an experience created by the setting combined with what a person brings to it. In other words, to some degree we create our own place, they do not exist independent of us.
- There are, however, certain settings that have such a strong “spirit of place” that they will tend to have a similar impact on many different people. The Grand Canyon and the left bank of the Seine in Paris are

excellent examples.

- Settings obviously have an impact on people, both short-term and long-term, and there are some patterns to this impact.

David Hummon (1992) took Steel's understanding of sense of place further by adding "sense of place is inevitably dual in nature, involving both an interpretive perspective on the environment and an emotional reaction to the environment" (Hummon, 1992).

- Stewart (1998) noticed the significance of sense of place and studied the work of scholars from different fields to better define the concept, and based upon his comprehensive definition, sense of place emerges as an umbrella concept that captures the relationship people form with place. They conclude that a definition contains following elements (D. R. Williams & Stewart, 1998):
- The emotional bond that people form with places (ex. HUL a type of place) over time and with similarity with those places.
- The strongly felt values, meanings, and symbols that are hard to identify know (and hard to quantify), especially if one is an "outsider" or unfamiliar with place.
- The valued qualities of the place that even an "insider" may not be consciously aware of until they are threatened or lost.
- The set of place meanings that are actively and continuously constructed and reconstructed within individual minds, shared cultures and social practices.
- The awareness of cultural, historical and spatial context within wide meaning, values and social interactions are formed.

3.2 Sense of place, memory and psychosocial well-being

All people experience some form of 'a sense place', but not all types are found in a given place. Sense of place studies are influenced by many variables that are space specific which make it difficult to generalize the conclusions to other places, but the most common categories include "social" "apathetic-acquiescent", "instrumental" and "nostalgic" sense of place (Sense of place, health, and quality of life, 2008). It was defined by Dattel and Dingemans (1984) to be the complex bundle of meaning, symbols and qualities that a person or a group associated with a particular locality or region (Shamai & Ilatov, 2005). Eyles 1985 described the nostalgic sense of place as the product of recalling past sentiments related to place (e.g. memories), and this shows that memories are part of sense of place.

Another thing that shows the relation between memory and sense of place and by its turn to psychosocial well-being is the environmental psychologists definition of cognition to be; the action of knowing consciousness, and they mentioned that this cognition includes: memories, feelings, attitudes values preferences, behavioural concepts and experiences (Lengen & Kistemann, 2012).

Eisenhauer (2000) suggested that sense of place is a holistic concept, and has two main components: the first is the interactions at the place among family or friends such as family activities and traditions, and the memories associated with people of the place (Shamai & Ilatov, 2005) .

Theoretical research on sense of place sketches it as an integration of psychological, social, and environmental operations in relation to physical places (HUL as a place) (A. Williams et al., 2008). The psychosocial approach views the individuals in the context of collective influence that psychological determinants and the ambient social environment have on their physical and mental wellness and their functionality (Woodward, 2015). Looking beyond survival to well-being is one of the main keys to achieve psychosocial values in place making. Well-being needs are linked to the fulfilment of life quality and psychological health (Heerwagen, 2008), and that could be demonstrated through the place based approach.

The place based approach focuses on the emotional sense of place embedded in the feeling, emotion and behaviour, and explains that the experience of place is not just physical but also perceptual and psychological where users (the public), their experience and perception are the key sources of evidence in understanding place attachment and place values. That approach in understanding the importance of the intangible place values and the emotional sense of place helps in the emergence of "Place-based planning" which is a planning that brings together diverse human values, uses, experiences, and activities tied to specific geographic locations (Kruger, 2008). It was also an experiment to create a democratic way of defining, expressing, and valuing places (Cheng, Kruger, & Daniels, 2003), these place values are important components of the way people appreciate, enjoy and experience their environments and that was expressed through Sara Ahmad observation " to be affected by something is to evaluate that thing"(Ahmed, 2004). Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn towards things. To give value to things is to shape what is near us " (Berberich, 2016).

Sense of place is founded on 3 components; observable activities and functions, and meaning or symbols (Taylor, 2008). Urban life is fundamentally based on the inherent struggle between the established systematic order and the pleasing anarchy. History, memories and local identity provide a much more accurate reflection on how the people enjoy their urban environment (Lim, 2000).

Attachments to people and places, when broken by displacement, arouse deep feelings of loss and grief (Lucy, 1994). As failure to satisfy survival needs may lead to serious illness or death, failure to meet the well-being needs

could lead to psychosocial maladjustment and stress-related illnesses (Heerwagen, 2008). Hence, place attachment is a positive element that contributes to sustaining place identity, and the sense of place, thus promote emotional well-being, fulfilment and happiness to the urban users (social well-being fulfilment), which arises its importance and role as a psychosocial value of a place.

CONCLUSION

Human well-being in space can be divided into the physical and psychosocial. The physical is tangible and affected by, for example, good site amenities, lighting, ventilation and good movement planning. This tangible part of well-being has been covered by urban planners who often give lower value to the intangible psychosocial part of well-being.

The psychosocial part of well-being is intangible and emotional and has great importance as it affects the human psyche leading to behaviour and social attitudes within a place. There are a myriad intangible things that humans can experience in a specific place but one of these is memory, specifically cultural memory, either good or bad. These memories will result in a specific feeling toward this place especially when dealing with a historic urban landscape (as a place). This experience of the intangible part of well-being touches a number of concepts including a sense of place, place attachment which link with place identity and feelings of nationalism. Therefore we can conclude that cultural memory can affect human psychosocial well-being leading to a specific human behaviour toward different places and different urban landscapes.

This paper shows that there is a direct relationship between cultural memory (with its psychosocial construct) and urban landscapes (as a type of places); such relationship impacts human well-being. This relationship between cultural memory and historic urban landscapes sheds the light on the importance of sense of place and the value of place, especially the intangible values such as emotions. However, there is a gap of knowledge in the body of literature on these relations. Hence, more research is required to deepen our understanding of the role of cultural memory in achieving psychosocial well-being in the Historic Urban Landscapes.

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