



Asian Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies, AcE-Bs2015, 20-22 February 2015,
Tehran, Iran

Comparing the Components of Sense of Place in the Traditional and Modern Residential Neighborhoods

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Abstract

Nowadays residential areas lack spirit and sense of place and become a place just for living in a shelter. It seems that the modern residential neighborhoods have a poorer sense of place in comparison to the traditional residential neighborhoods. In this study, after examining the literature on the subject, a theoretical framework was developed. Accordingly, the components effective on sense of place in residential neighborhoods have been reviewed through quantitative method and via questionnaire. Results showed that in traditional neighborhoods, “the social components and activities” and in modern neighborhoods, “the physical and visual components” obtained higher scores.

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Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies, Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia).

Keywords: Sense of place; traditional residential neighborhood; modern residential district

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem statement

Nowadays, in spite of accessing more ways to communicate, the social relations have become less with reduced quality. Big cities have created people with more limited sensational memoirs and experiences. The views controlling the development of a modern city have made Man, city and architecture unfamiliar with meaning and sense. Such views generating a plenty of unidentified and meaningless spaces have left Man alone with no identity

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and place. In general, losing the imagination of place of living can be the dominant feature of the current crisis taking from Man the memoirs connecting this world to the human life. Currently, the residential areas have changed to the places with no spirit and sense and turning to a room just for living. In fact, the modern residential areas comparing to the traditional ones seem to be the residences with an inadequate sense of place. The present study aims at finding the reasons of and some strategies to solve the existing crisis.

1.2. Literature review

Place means "being" and "room". "Being" by itself means "the existence" and "having existence"; it can also refer to "survive" and "living." One of the other meanings of being is "situating" and "happening" (Dehkhoda, 1994). Thus, it can be interpreted that place itself is where the events flow. The events that are going on in order to live; and as having a close relation with the existence and life it is also life-giving. Place is where we have a perfect understanding of the existence and life (Habibi, 2008). Ali Madanipur (2000) knows place as a part of the space with a sense of value and meaning. Afshar Naderi (1999) imagines that a place is where resulted from interacting three components 1) human behavior, 2) definitions and 3) physical features (Mahmoodi Nejad, 2008). Place is a part of the space that due to certain factors will acquire a unique and unrepeatable identity. Shoultz states: "it is a feature of architecture to alter an area into place; that is to act out the potentiality of the environment" (Reiesi, 2012). According to phenomenology, place is somewhere more than an abstract area. Place is a totality built of real objects and things and with materials, substance, form, texture, and color. All the components together define the environmental character of the place (Partovi, 2003).

Place has some features such as sense. The landscape reflects the sense of any place. It is the view that reflects the conditions of the location and shows the human values, activities and objectives (Mahmoodi Nejad, 2008). Phenomenologists know the sense of place as a link due to understanding the routine symbols and activities. This kind of feeling can be created in one's place of living and get depth over time (Relph, 1976). Individual and social values influence on the quality of the sense of place. The standards, views and, in particular, the individual and social behavior of people are also under the influence of the feeling of the site of living. Individuals' participation in the social activities depends on how they feel about the place of life. The sense of place is not only creates coordination and proper functioning of the human and architectural environment but also provides a sense of security, fun and emotional awareness for the individuals. It is certainly a sense of place to help the identity and belonging sense of people to place (Canter, 1971). An overview of the defined sense of place shows that sense of place is a result of the relationship of Man, his mental imaginations, and environmental characteristics. The concept, on the one hand, is rooted in the subjective experiences such as memories, traditions, history, culture, and society. It can be affected by the objective and external effects in the environment such as design, landscape, smell, and sound, on the other hand. Accordingly, sense of place is a complicated concept of the human feelings and attachment towards the environment that is produced due to the adaptation and use of place by the human. It means that sense of place has not been a predetermined event but results from the human interaction with the environment (Falihat, 2006).

1.3. Objectives and statements

The aim of this study is to explore the feasibility and provide a model to evaluate and investigate the dimensions of sense of place in the texture of urban residential neighborhoods. Other objectives are to explain the effectiveness of the dimensions of the subjective perception of citizens, and present a model to assess the effectiveness of the dimensions of sense of place from the subjective images.

2. Theoretical framework

The well-known theoretical model of "David Canter", a pioneer of the conceptual studies in architecture and urban design, can be one of the theoretical frameworks capable of explaining the components of the urban design quality. Based on the model of Fig. 1. (a) (known as place type), the urban environment is a "place" consisting of three tangled dimensions "form", "Activities" and the "imagination". According to the theory, the quality of urban

design is the result of three components. Each component must meet one of the three conditions, "form", "activity" and the "imagination" of the city environment (Canter, 1977). The attractiveness and efficiency of model "counter" have led other scholars of the urban design to present various versions of the model. For example, the model "sense of place" of "John Panter" referring to the components involved in creating a sense of place can be a subversion of the model "Canter". Based on the model "John Panter" in Fig. 2. (b), three components of "form", "activity" and "meaning" are involved in creating a sense of place. The components of "Panter" are similar to those suggested by "Canter" namely "form," "activities" and "imagination" (Panter, 1991).

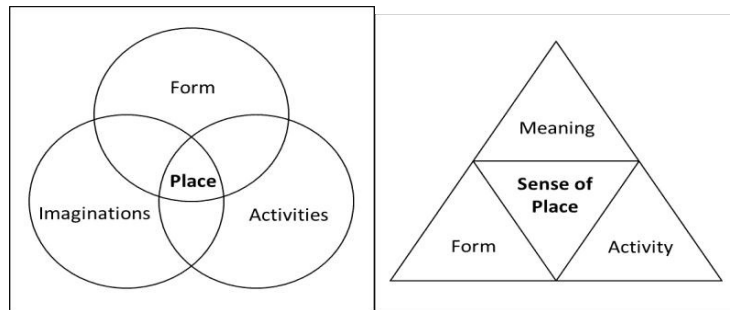


Fig. 1. (a) Sense of place model (Canter, 1977); (b) Sense of place model (Panter, 1977).

In the model of Canter, the physical factors due to the quality of design, improve the concepts and activities. And meeting the biological, mental and social needs of the human, the physical factors will be the result of a series of perceptions, satisfaction and finally a sense of place (Falahat, 2006). Fig. 2. illustrates the factors affecting the meaning of place and how the process would be from the perspective of Falahat. The model "permanent place" of Golkar in Fig. 3. includes the bio-environmental criterion, in addition to the three primary dimensions (form, activity and concept) mentioned in the conceptual models of previous papers (such as Canter model and etc.) (Golkar, 2000).

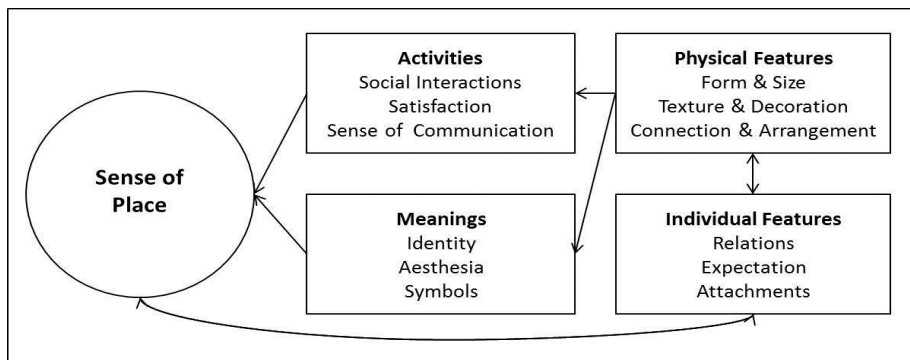


Fig. 2. The model of important factors forming sense of place (Falahat, 2006).

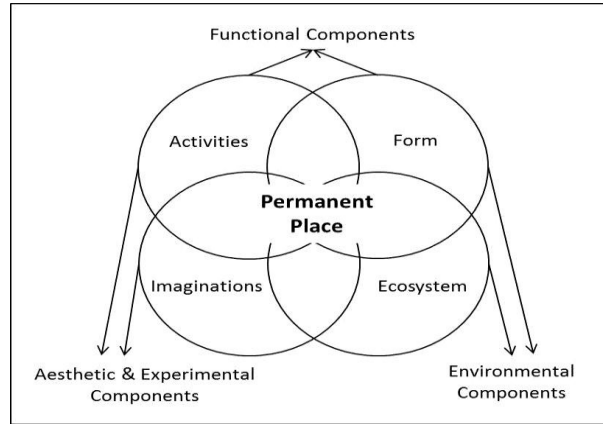


Fig. 3. Permanent place model (Golkar, 2000).

Schultz has mentioned the principles related to place and its formed mental image that creates the meaning and sense of place described in Table 1 (Purmand, 2010).

Table 1. The main principles of Schultz model of Sense of place.

Schultz model of sense of place	
Criteria	Sub-criteria
Typology	Moods
	Perception and Understanding of the Environment
	Dialog and Discussion
Topology	Being with others
	Landscape (natural entities)
	Built Complexes (natural entities)
Morphology	Space and Character

Maria Lewicka divides the components creating sense of place, into three physical, social and demographic categories. Each category contains a number of factors described in Table 2 (Lewicka, 2010).

Table 2. The main principles of Lewicka model of sense of place.

Lewicka model of sense of place	
Criteria	Sub-criteria
Physical	Type of housing
	Building size
	Yard House
Social	Social Neighborhood Relations
	Feeling of security
Social and Demographic	Age and Education
	Period of stay
	Family size

Table 3. Developed theoretical framework for the components of a sense of place.

Final Theoretical Framework Sense of Place		
Criteria	Sub-criteria	Theoretician
Demographic characteristics	Age	Lewica
	Education	
	Length of stay	
	Family size	
Physical and visual features	The quality of the physical form (type, size and area of residence)	Canter
	The quality of the physical components in the context of the neighborhood	Panter
	objective Landscape quality in the context of the neighborhood	Falahat
	Quality of access in the neighborhood	Golkar
Social characteristics and activities	Opportunity for social interaction	Canter
	Providing a variety of activities and entertainment	Panter
	Feeling of security	Falahat
	Satisfaction of the neighborhood	Golkar
Meanings		Lewica
	Sense of identity	Schultz
Ecosystem	Legibility and the symbolic grabber	
	The quality of the natural landscape	Golkar
	Harmony with the natural environment	

3. Methodology

Initially applying the descriptive and library method, the research examines the components affecting the sense of place in residential neighborhoods. Accordingly, the components have been reviewed through survey and quantitative method and via questionnaire filled out by 60 residents of the neighborhoods Kan and Baharan through Multistage Cluster sampling method. The components of sense of place in the two traditional (Kan) and modern (Baharan) neighborhoods were prioritized based on Likert scale. Finally, the research compares and analyzes the components to find the strengths and weaknesses. So that the research has provided some guidelines for strengthening sense of place.

4. Case study

In order to compare the centers of the neighborhoods of "Kan" (Red Color) and "Baharan" (Blue Color), it is necessary to recognize firstly, the areas as the immediate areas of the centers; and secondly, the centers of the districts. At the study, using municipality articles and information of areas it is attempted to recognize the regions. To do so, the field study has been conducted through presence and images taken at the location.



Fig. 4. Photo of the selected region, [1].

4.1. Residential neighborhood "Kan"

"Kan" is the name of the river, district and a part located in the North West of Tehran Province. Architectural texture of Kan is mud and brick and of metal and wood roofs. One can still find the remained texture in the narrow alleys and the two- story old houses. Individual tranquility prevails in this village, although, currently the highways surrounding the area and narrow alleys packed with cars have disrupted the tranquility a bit. "Kan" has five old neighborhoods named in the local language Balloon, Asmaloon, Myunde, Darghazy, Sarasiyab (Wikipedia).



Fig. 5. photo of the Kan region, [2].

4.2. Residential neighborhood "Baharan"

"Baharan" is also a neighborhood located in the North West of Tehran Province. Comparing to Kan, Baharan is considered a modern area that has been built only about 20 years. Contrary to the neighborhood "Kan", Baharan has a texture of geometric order and uniform houses and wide streets. The crowdedness of cars and people in the neighborhood "Baharan" is less in comparison to neighborhood Kan (Author).



Fig. 6. photo of the Baharan neighborhood, [2].

5. Finding results

Regarding the final weight of "physical and visual components" and the related chart we conclude that according to residents, high quality of the houses with garden considerably increases sense of place; and regarding the high quantity and quality of car access, the impact is minimal. The effect of the factors on the differentiation of both neighborhoods is also in the list. In the neighborhood of Kan the shape, color and building facade and the neighborhood of Baharan the quality of houses with yard spaces has been proposed as the most important factors (Chart 1).

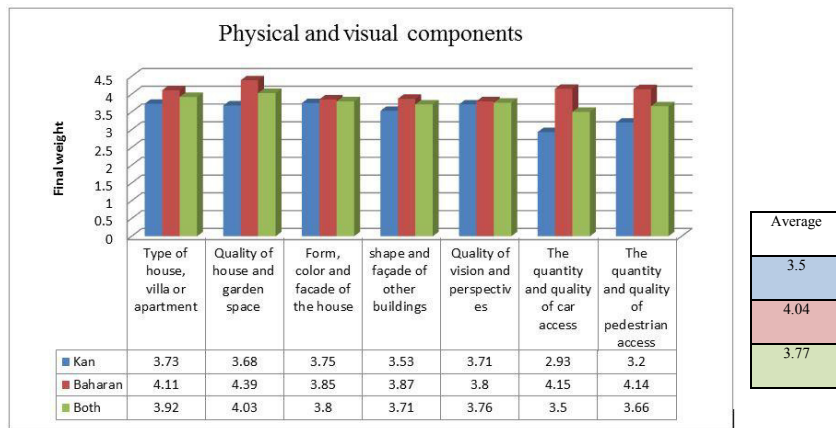


Chart 1. physical and visual components 1: very bad, 2: bad, 3: middle, 4: good, 5: very good.

The following table shows the effect of all components forming physical and visual features in increasing the sense of place of the neighborhood, to the priority order of the residents and in general in both neighborhoods (Table 4).

Table 4. Physical and visual components.

physical and visual components							
neighborhood		Sub-criteria					
Kan	Form, color and facade of the house	Type of house, villa or apartment	Quality of vision and perspectives	Quality of house and garden space	shape and facade of other buildings	The quantity and quality of pedestrian access	The quantity and quality of car access
Baharan	Quality of house and garden space	The quantity and quality of car access	The quantity and quality of pedestrian access	Type of house, villa or apartment	shape and facade of other buildings	Form, color and facade of the house	Quality of vision and perspectives
Total	Quality of house and garden space	Type of house, villa or apartment	Form, color and facade of the house	Quality of vision and perspectives	shape and facade of other buildings	The quantity and quality of pedestrian access	The quantity and quality of car access

Regarding the final weight of "social and activity components" and the related chart we conclude that according to residents, the social satisfaction of the neighborhood increases sense of place; and regarding the amount of social security in the neighborhood, the impact is minimal. The effect of the factors on the differentiation of both neighborhoods is also in the list. The amount of social security in both areas has been proposed as the most important factor (Chart 2).

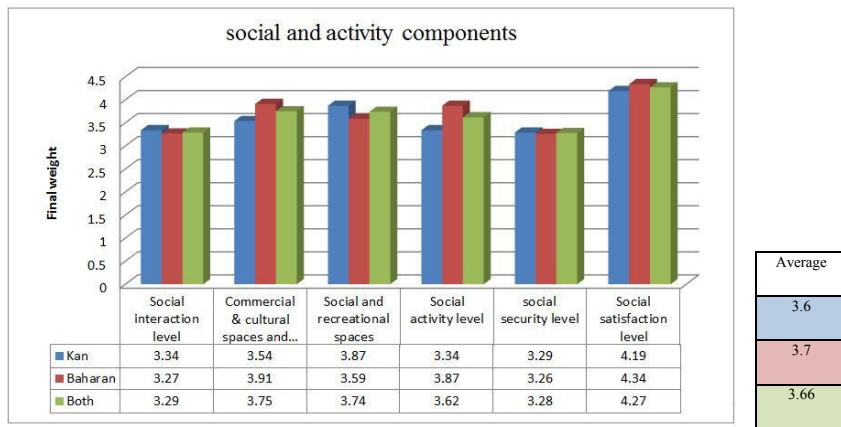


Chart 2. Social and activity components – 1: very bad, 2: bad, 3: middle, 4: good, 5: very good.

The following table shows the effect of all components forming the social and activity features in increasing the sense of place of the neighborhood, to the priority order of the residents and in general in both neighborhoods (Table 5).

Table 5. Social and activity components.

Social and activity components						
neighborhood	Sub-criteria					
Kan	Social satisfaction level	Social and recreational spaces	Commercial & cultural spaces	Social activity level	Social interaction level	social security level
Baharan	Social satisfaction level	Commercial & cultural spaces	Social activity level	Social and recreational spaces	Social interaction level	social security level
Total	Social satisfaction level	Commercial & cultural spaces	Social and recreational spaces	Social activity level	Social interaction level	social security level

Regarding the final weight of "the components of meanings and ecosystem" and the related chart we conclude that according to residents, the sense of identity in the neighborhood increases sense of place; and regarding the area recognition by others, the impact is minimal. The effect of the factors on the differentiation of both neighborhoods is also in the list. The amount of the sense of identity in both areas has been proposed as the most important factor (Chart 3).

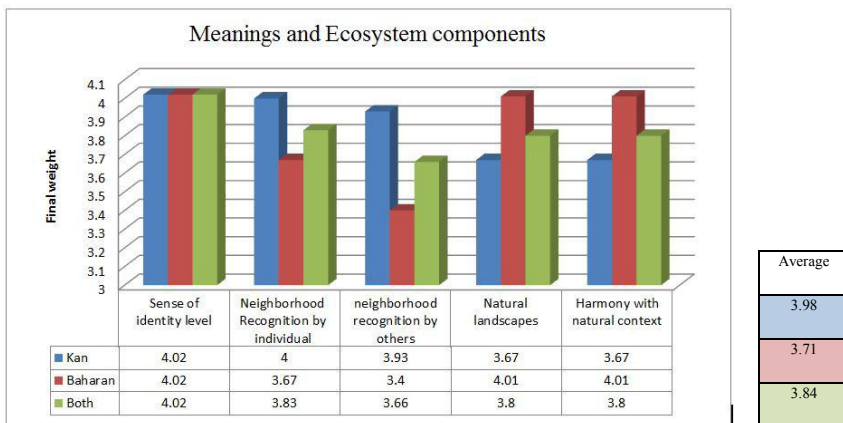


Chart 3. The components of meanings and ecosystem 1: very bad, 2: bad, 3: middle, 4: good, 5: very good.

The following table shows the effect of all components forming the meanings and ecosystem features in increasing the sense of place of the neighborhood, to the priority order of the residents and in general in both neighborhoods (Table 6).

Table 6. The components of meanings and ecosystem.

The components of meanings and ecosystem					
neighborhood			Sub-criteria		
Kan	Sense of identity level	Neighborhood Recognition by individual	neighborhood recognition by others	Natural landscape	Harmony with the natural context
Baharan	Sense of identity level	Natural landscapes	Harmony with the natural context	Neighborhood Recognition by individual	neighborhood recognition by others
Total	Sense of identity level	Neighborhood Recognition by individual	Natural landscape	Harmony with the natural context	neighborhood recognition by others

6. Conclusion, strengths and weaknesses and suggesting strategies

According to averages, In the traditional neighborhoods, first "meaning components", second "social and activities components", and third "physical and visual components" received a higher grade, respectively. In the modern neighborhoods, first "physical and visual components", second "meaning components", and third "social and activities components" received a higher grade, respectively. So this affair indicates that the result certain factors in the both areas should be strengthened to enhance the sense of place.

The possibilities and limitations found in the studied areas (Kan and Baharan) relying on the views of the inhabitants are within the developed theoretical framework. According to observations, comments and findings mentioned in the previous section, some strategies are presented to improve the quality of life of residents and strengthen a sense of place of the neighborhoods (Table 7).

Table 7. Strengths and weaknesses and suggesting strategies.

Sense of place	Neighbor hoods	Possibilities	Limitations	Strategies
Physical and visual components	Kan	-vision and diverse and fascinating areas on the streets	-highly different shape and size of facades -Poor vision and the texture of spaces. Poor quality car access -Lack of good walking pathways	- Suitable making wall surrounding and well-organized empty spaces to create the appropriate spaces. - Definition of pathway entrance connecting to the community centers using narrow and open space -Definition of private domains (home) and public (community centers) through the definition of a line between the entrance of houses, plants, flooring and..
	Baharan	-Uniform shape and size facade of houses -of good quality car access	-views and uniform spaces within the texture -Lack of good walking pathways and lack of attention to walking-oriented	-Use of local materials in construction, especially in community centers, materials such as wood and stone
Social and activities components	Kan	-recognition and sympathy of residents -The presence of commercial spaces, cultural, sports and religious -well Security on the day -High dependence on the neighborhood	-Limited social abnormal interactions -The lack of commercial, cultural, sports and religious spaces -Low security at night	-Good variety of business and leisure facilities, Coffee shops, local restaurants, children's playground, green spaces in community Centers -Prediction of urban furniture movable in the space in relation to commercial and recreational use - Creating places for motion activities such as sitting

	Baharan	-The presence of commercial, cultural, sports and religious spaces -good security at day and night	-Lack of understanding and sympathy of residents- Limited social interactions -No use of commercial, cultural, sports and religious spaces -little dependence on the neighborhood	- Strengthening activities and lighting to encourage living at night -Provision of appropriate furniture in the space for staying -Predicting the possibility of walking in space
Meanings Component	Kan	-Recognition and high sense of identity of the neighborhood	-The presence of people from other nations and lack of shaping	-culture making -High quality of other factors affecting the component
	Baharan	-well understanding of the neighborhood	-Lack of high identity to the neighborhood	
Ecosystem component	Kan	-Very good quality of the natural landscape	-Lack of suitable Designing coordinated with the natural context	-Sequence of views and perspectives -Landscaping with water and vegetation in community centers
	Baharan	-Very good quality of the natural landscape	-Lack of suitable Designing coordinated with the natural context	

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