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People-Place relationship: a dynamic process not a static state

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ABSTRACT

Research on the people-place relationship has been approached from several perspectives, focusing on separate aspects rather than studying it within a unified framework. Also, the people-make-place aspect, which is vital to the relationship, is ignored in these studies. By integrating three major aspects: "people in place," "people-make-place," and "people-place emotional bonds." This review paper aims to conduct a holistic theoretical framework to explain the dynamic relationship between people and place. Descriptive methodology has been adopted in the research. The main result shows that people-make-place is a foundational aspect that shapes the people-place relationship on two levels: the conscious and the unconscious. On the other hand, people-place emotional bonds serve as the motivation behind the continued existence of the relationship. At last, a comprehensive theoretical framework has been provided. Policymakers and professionals can use this framework to understand better how to incorporate these dynamics into future place development. The paper includes suggestions for future research.

1. introduction

People's relationships with their places are as important as those they form among themselves. Places contain tangible items, symbols, and ongoing events, making them essential aspects of personal and collective identity [1]. Thus, studying people and places separately is impossible, as they are intertwined. It is commonly accepted that just as people shape places, places also shape people. Therefore, relationships between people and places always evolve rather than remain static [2].

The relationship between people and place has been studied in multiple forms. Some studies have addressed this relationship through three interrelated

levels: the meaning of place, the social relationship of place, and the symbolic perspective of the place represented in place attachment [3]. Other studies have looked at the relationship from three dimensions: cognitive, which involves understanding the geometry of the place and its function, and emotional, which is associated with the meaning of the place [4]. Some studies have focused solely on the emotional aspect, considering the sense of place as a broad concept to analyse the relationship [5] or considering place attachment instead [6]. The studies above indicate that the people-make-place aspect is often ignored, although it is crucial to the relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate all aspects of the people-place relationship, including the people-make-place aspect, into a single framework.

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This review paper aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding and explaining the dynamic nature of the relationship between people and places. The framework includes three key interrelated aspects: people-in-place, people-make-place, and people-place emotional bonds. The first aspect focuses on the cognitive and behavioural aspects of the relationship, while the second examines how people transform spaces into places. The third aspect explores people's emotional bonds to a place and how they are expressed in various ways.

2. Research Methodology

This inductive research utilizes a qualitative data from secondary published documents regarding the relationship between people and places. The data were analyzed through descriptive methodology and categorized into three main aspects: people-in-place, people-make-place, and people-place emotional bonds. By examining each aspect's nature and interrelationships, a comprehensive theoretical framework has been proposed to explain their nature and how they relate to each other.

3. Place definitions

Places are directly experienced phenomena. Significant events occur in these places. The character of a place influences these events, and these events, in turn, contribute to the character of the place. However, the essence of a place cannot be found in its location, the functions it serves, the people who live there, or ordinary experiences. As Relph explains, the essence of a place mainly lies in the unconscious purpose that identifies it as a fundamental center of human existence [1]. In this sense, a place is where people use their bodies habitually and unconsciously to perform specific tasks. So, these places are built to meet primary needs such as food, water, and procreation, making them valuable centers [7].

The concept of "place" has evolved from being just a physical location where people fulfill their basic needs. It has been recognized as a continuous process encompassing socialization and social reproduction. Socialization occurs when society's social and cultural norms shape people's everyday activities. On the other hand, social reproduction takes place when individuals shape society through their daily activities. Hence,

socialization and social reproduction processes are interlinked and occur simultaneously [8].

For example, consider a new green rectangular of grass in a particular spot. A person can walk around the rectangle or take a shortcut by crossing diagonally to get to the other side. If enough people take the shortcut, a muddy path will appear within a few weeks, indicating the new structure of people's desire (see Fig 1). This illustrates how places are shaped by the actions of the people who inhabit them, and these places will continue to evolve. It's a never-ending process [9].



Fig 1: the muddy paths that people create through the grassy area. Source [9].

Later, the concept of "place" has been linked to its meanings. The meanings of a place depend on the people or communities that allocate them [10]. These meanings stem from a place's history, whether the formal history documented in books or the informal history created by people practicing their everyday lives. These meanings differentiate one place from another. Therefore, places are social constructs that offer identity, community, and security [11].

To conclude, the definition of "place" has developed through three distinct phases. The classical definition refers to physical spaces that serve primary needs, while the second definition regards "place" as a process that is always changing and never complete. The third and current definition that our paper is concerned with emphasizes the social aspect of "place," defining it as a social construct.

4. People-in-place

People not only occupy physical space, but they

also create a unique spatial structure in two ways. First, they arrange themselves in relation to one another, resulting in diverse movements and interaction patterns. Second, they construct the physical environment using buildings, boundaries, pathways, signs, zones, and other features to create a well-defined spatial pattern. This spatial order reflects the cultural differences between various social formations and how people in those societies live and create their social lives. For instance, homes in a city like London are directly connected to the street network. In contrast, in a city like Paris, the closed courtyards break this direct connection, resulting in distinct differences [12].

People's behaviour in a particular place can reveal essential information about their relationship with that place [13]. People use their senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, to understand the places around them. The brain processes this sensory information, creating mental maps of the place at different scales, known as the cognition process. These mental maps help people perceive the place and decide their behaviour. Therefore, people's behaviour in a particular place is influenced by their perception of its physical characteristics [2].

On the other hand, Places can also influence people's behaviour. They create structures and limits represented in place framing and regulations that affect how people behave in the place. The framing of a place refers to how we interpret and understand the place based on its accessibility, usage, and visibility. This can vary depending on different groups of people, as some may challenge the intended use of a place. For example, a park may be intended for relaxation, picnics, and family gatherings but may also be used as a makeshift home for the homeless. Place regulation, on the other hand, refers to social norms that dictate how people should behave in specific places [3].

5. People-make-place

The concept of placemaking has evolved. In the 1990s, it shifted from solely focused on physical changes created by urban planners to an iterative process involving local communities' decision-making. There are three approaches to placemaking: bottom-up, top-down, and collaborative. In the bottom-up approach, local communities take the lead with little involvement from other stakeholders. The top-down approach involves decision-making by private and government sectors for large-scale, high-investment development. The collaborative approach

involves stakeholders, communities, and experts from the beginning till the end, including consultation, implementation, and evaluation. The roles of the stakeholders may sometimes be different, and they can be community-based or expert-based [14]. However, this paper specifically focuses on placemaking, where local communities are involved.

In this sense, organizations, such as Project for Public Spaces (PPS), that utilize a Bottom-up approach have established eleven principles for placemaking to create a successful and enjoyable place that encompasses four key features: sociability, usage and activities, comfort and image, and accessibility [15]. The eleven principles of placemaking are as follows:

- The community is the expert.
- Design is a vital component of creating a place but is not the only factor.
- Finding the right partners will bring more resources and creative ideas.
- They will always say, "It cannot be done."
- The best way to improve a community is to monitor its day-to-day activities closely.
- Develop a vision.
- The form supports the function.
- Make the connections.
- Start little; these steps will lead to huge changes.
- Community involvement will help find ideas about financial obstacles.
- Places need to be maintained after the project is done (it is not finished).

Placemaking is the process of transforming a space into a place by giving it meaning, identity, and value. People accomplish this by taking small steps and building social relationships that make the space appropriate for daily living. For example, when people volunteer to plant trees in a public park, they show a level of interest and involvement that goes beyond mere use of the park. The positioning of the trees and other modifications to the park demonstrate a commitment to transforming it into a meaningful place [16].

The involvement of people in the process of placemaking and decision-making plays a crucial role in shaping a city's identity and culture. Youth participation is particularly important since they will inherit the outcomes, thus ensuring the city's sustainable development [17]. The concept behind this participation process is to allow those affected by a decision to have the right to make it. The participation process comprises several stages, beginning with

informing and ending with empowering. Here are the steps [18]:

- Inform: provide people with information to help them understand problems, opportunities, solutions, etc.
- Consult: discuss with people about decisions, alternatives, solutions, etc.
- Involve: work directly with people to guarantee that their aspirations and interests are understood and appreciated.
- Collaborate partner with people in decision-making and in selecting the preferred solution.
- Empower: Let the final decision be in the hand of people.

The concept of placemaking has been developed to explain the process by involving five key elements, known as "the 5p framework": people, process, product, program, and place evaluation. This framework suggests that placemaking is a continuous, complex process that involves shaping a place in a bottom-up process to create strong emotional connections between people and the place. This process also aims to establish shared meaning and a sense of purpose to achieve positive outcomes such as a sense of place, empowerment, social inclusion, cohesion, improved health, and overall sustainability through programming. The evaluation of the place will uncover these outcomes [19].

It is no wonder that people's involvement plays a crucial role in the placemaking process and should be its core pillar. A key sign of successful placemaking is when more people participate [20]. Research shows that such participation is often informal, tactical and employs temporary, small, and low-tech interventions. For instance, middle-class residents may contribute to placemaking to educate poorer groups within their neighbourhood and work together on activities such as clean-ups and individual development projects to make their community more meaningful [14].

6. People-place emotional bonds

There are various concepts used to describe emotional relationships to a place. These include sense of place, place attachment, place identity, and place dependence. Sense of place is a broad concept encompassing the two other concepts [21] and involves psychological and physical aspects. Place attachment mostly concerns psychological aspects [4].

Place dependence is a form of place attachment [22, 23], and it represents the functional attachment to a place [24]. Place identity relates to how a place contributes to a person's sense of self. [23].

6.1. Sense of place

The sense of place results from the interaction between people and places. It stems from people's subjective experiences, such as memories, traditions, history, culture, and society, as well as the objective and external influences of the place, such as the landscape, smell, and sound. Therefore, there is a mutual relationship between people and their places. People perceive different positive or negative meanings from their places and then attribute other meanings to those places [4].

Accordingly, the meanings attached to a place significantly impact producing sense of place. sense of place is a collection of meanings actively created and recreated within people's minds, shared cultures, and social practices. These meanings and values are formed in historical, cultural, and spatial contexts [25]. Therefore, sense of place includes both a place's physical aspects and the meanings people attach to it through their experiences [26]. Ultimately, a sense of place comprises three interconnected components: the physical characteristics of a place, the social practices, and personal and shared meanings [27].

6.2. Place attachment

Place attachment is the emotional connection between people and a specific place [28, 29, 30, 31]. A three-dimensional framework has been presented to clarify the concept of place attachment. This framework encompasses the person, place, and process dimensions. The person dimension indicates that attachment can occur at individual and group levels. The place dimension illustrates the object of attachment. Finally, the third dimension represents the psychological process of the attachment mechanism [31].

Attachment to a place can occur through various ways. Firstly, spending time in a particular place helps people develop a sense of attachment by becoming familiar with their surroundings. This includes knowing where things are located and who their neighbors and friends are. As a result, they become more self-reliant and prefer to remain in that place [32]. Secondly, people can become attached to a place

through their daily routines, which involve long-term engagement with that place [29].

Thirdly, a change in place can evoke feelings of attachment. This is apparent when a person's home or neighborhood is destroyed by a natural or man-made disaster, resulting in a shift in their daily routine. This shift results in attachment in the form of emotions such as sadness, regret, worry, fear, or grief [29]. Fourthly, one's attachment to a place is often a result of their interpersonal attachment to other people [30]. People initially form bonds with each other in specific locations, which leads to an attachment to those places [33].

6.2.1. Place dependence

Place dependence is another form of place attachment [22, 23]. It focuses on the resources and features that a place offers to help people achieve their goals and engage in preferred activities [34, 35, 36]. If a place satisfies key objectives for people, it generates positive feelings toward that place. Hence, the level of dependence a person has on a place is determined by how satisfied they are in achieving their objectives, needs, desires, and motivations [34].

Two factors can impact a place dependence: the quality of the place and people's expectations for it. Place quality refers to how well a place enables people to achieve their goals. This can include having various housing options, different types of land use, and good street connectivity. On the other hand, place expectation is the set of expectations people have for their interactions with a place. Various factors, such as accessibility, continuity, and street network connectivity, can influence these expectations [35].

6.3. Place identity

Place identity is assumed to be part of self-identity that emerges from the awareness of past, present, and physical settings in particular places and expresses people's day-to-day existence. Therefore, place identity will be modified over the person's lifecycle according to the gender, age, social class, personality, and other social aspects of the person [37]. In this sense, people can express themselves through their places (i.e., place identification). For example, people from London may refer to themselves as Londoner [38]. Therefore, Place identity is the process through which people describe themselves as part of a particular place due to interaction with this place [22].

On the other hand, it is argued that place identity is

associated with a place's physical nature and structures. The physical structures of a place serve as a visible reference to people's memories and social interactions [23]. Therefore, place identity is largely associated with physical appearance and how people perceive it. Considering the degree to which people are emotionally connected to the place and the significance they attribute to it [34].

So, people shape their social and personal identities by interacting with their places' physical and symbolic aspects. At the same time, these aspects of the place also shape and contribute to forming a person's identity. Therefore, place identity is a mutual dynamic and circular process [39].

7. Results and discussion

The main finding suggests that the people-make-place aspect shapes the relationship between people and place on two levels, unconsciously and consciously.

Secondly, people-place emotional bonds represent the motivator of the continuity of the relationship between people and place.

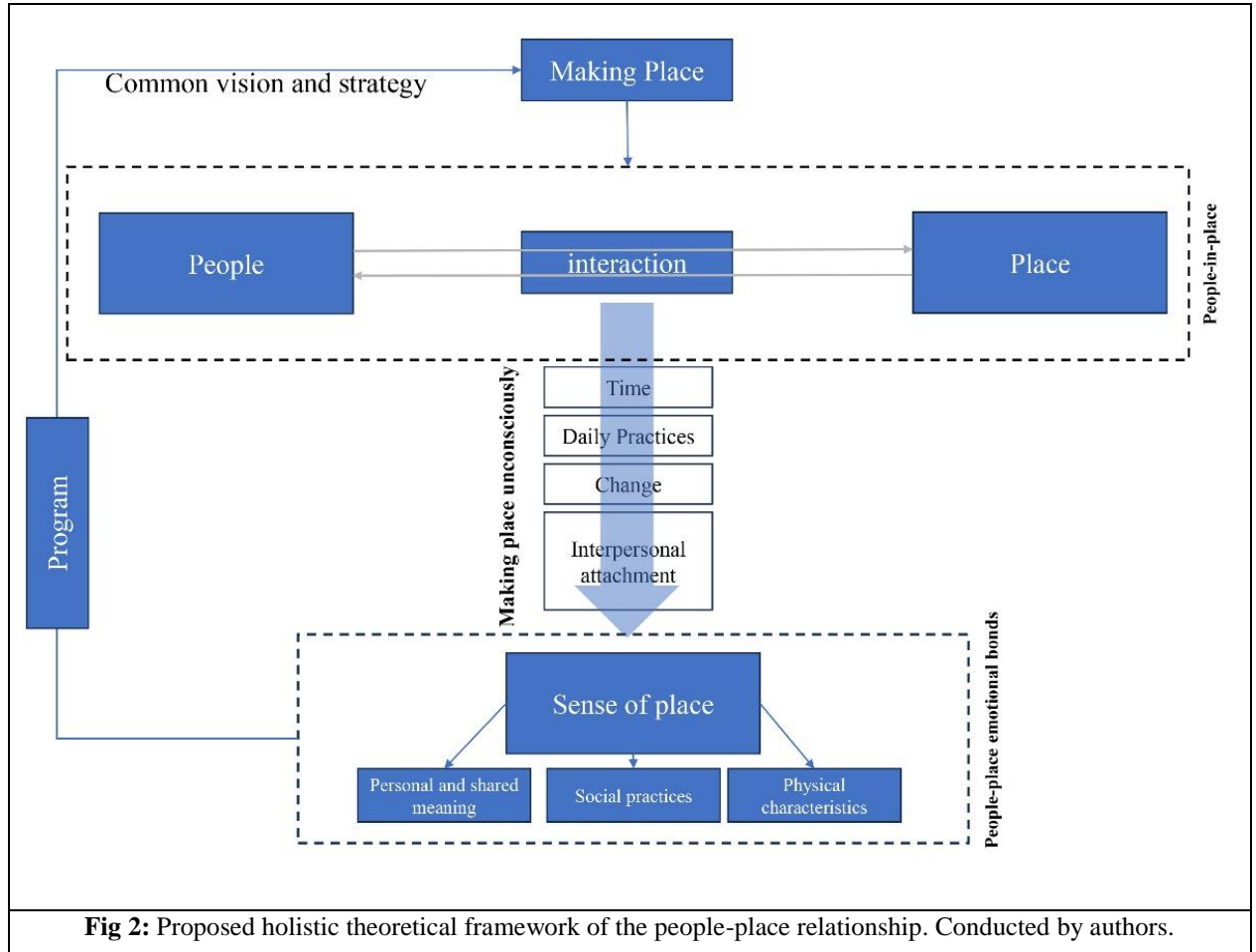
Finally, A holistic theoretical framework has been presented to illustrate the dynamic nature of the relationship between people and places.

The relationship between people and places is shaped by the people-make-place aspect, both consciously and unconsciously. At a subconscious level, people perform regular behaviours in a given location daily, which turns the space into a place. On the other hand, at a conscious level, people are motivated by emotional bonds to a place to work together towards a common goal of improving it. Subsequently, people will perform daily behaviours that will make the place again by producing new meanings, leading them to make it iteratively with a common goal. It is a continuous, dynamic process.

The framework (see **Fig 2**) comprises three main interconnected aspects, each affected by various influential factors. The first aspect is "people-in-place," which determines that people engage in the process of understanding to reach a behavioural decision affected by place constraints. The second aspect is "people-place emotional bonds," which refers to the evolving mutual relationship between people and place through time, daily practices, interpersonal attachment, and changes in the physical place. The third aspect is "people-make-place with common vision and strategy," which involves creating a place through the bottom-up approach and maintaining it

through regularly evaluated programs aimed at making improvements.

been suggested to better understand the people-place relationship. This framework adopts three main



8. Conclusion

The relationship between people and places is a complex and dynamic process that involves the establishment of emotional bonds over time through making and remaking. These emotional bonds then lead to the creation of places with common visions and strategies for improvement. This is a complex process that involves multiple iterations, each with different outcomes depending on the circumstances. This highlights the importance of the people-make-place aspect in shaping and constructing the relationship in a comprehensive sense. Therefore, including the people-make-place aspect while studying the relationship is necessary.

To gather and analyse data from secondary published sources, a qualitative method has been adopted. A comprehensive theoretical framework has

aspects: people-in-place, people-make-place, and people-place emotional bond. Policymakers and professionals can use this framework to determine how to best develop places to accommodate these dynamics.

The focus of future research will be on validating the framework. This framework will be transformed into a questionnaire encompassing every factor, testing the existence of every aspect using the Likert scale. It will be tested through a pilot study before presenting it to a larger group in a specific area.

This review paper suggests that future research should focus on investigating the influence of digital technology on the relationship between people and their places. Given that digital technologies have become an integral part of our daily routines and act as a mediator between people and their places.

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