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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF “SENSE OF PLACE” WITHIN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE SETTING.

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#### Abstract

Concern on a sense of place in cultural landscape setting of the historic city has been a global perennial issue. Literature search shows that there have been enormous effort to sustain the idea of sense of place or local wisdom in the cultural landscape studies. This paper discusses on landscape elements that help to elevate the feeling of sense of place in the context of culture. This paper deliberates on the idea of people's perception, experience and responses towards their surroundings based on intangible and landscape elements that relate to their culture and norms. Content analysis has been used in reviewing on the prominent researchers discussing on the idea of “sense of place” are adopted in this study. It was conducted to analyse the fundamental notions of place, perception and experience. This paper concludes that places add value and significantly contribute in establishing the urban setting while elevating a sense of place in the cultural context.

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#### Introduction:-

Built environment researcher in general, believes on the importance of “sense of place” in natural and built environmental landscape settings. ‘Place’ is defined as space states between people and the environment setting. Place to mankind is always associated with certain values, unique in character and it is notably accepted as an important issue in environmental and behaviour study.

The concept of “Sense of place” refers to a whole set of cultural settings and it is reflected in the way we respond to place. Place explored by man stands with its own unique character without exception. It is always embedded with “meaning” thus, making it very special to each and every one in this world. Sense of place is one of the important aspects in cultural context that has great potential in integrating or connecting people and place. Literature search reveals that there are significant numbers of studies focussing on the effects of how people ‘feel, appreciate and engage themselves’ in space and place. The term, definition and theory of “sense of place” discussed by various research disciplines in the field of built environment and behaviour studies namely, landscape architects, architects, urban and regional planner and urban designers and it will be deliberated in the following discussion, namely humanistic and geographical.

#### Understanding the Concept of “Sense of Place”:-

The concept of “sense of place” can be described and experienced in a number of different dimensions. Analysis of the literature search recognized three dimensions namely the social, spiritual and physical that significantly

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associated with place and people(Thwaites & Simkins, 2007; Carmona, Heath, Oc & Tiesdell, 2006; Gordon Cullen, 1971; Tuan, 2011). The following definitions give the meaning of each of these dimensions.

**Sense of Place in Relation to Social Dimension:-**

Thwaites (2007) in his classic critique of the sense of place has found a chronology that distinguished the related experts and others. Experts directly expressed a sense of place as to look at how people perceive and a way of seeing. The result is the human response reflecting the sense of localities with distinguish “feeling” connecting them to the each and individual places (Thwaites & Simkins, 2007:p.143). Table 1 shows the roles of the notable authors discussing on the spiritual dimension as an important aspect in achieving a unique sense of place. Tuan (2011) explained their own “hierarchy of identity and placelessness” from their views as humanistic and geographers (Cullen, 1971; p.5 & p.6). Other theoretical studies from the experts listed in Table 1 include significant activities (human and local), exploring space related to place to man’s physical environment (academia and practice), and contribution of place attachment. Cullen (1971) argues that to achieve a unique sense of place, individual townscape elements should be designed as part of a whole (Cullen, 1971). All these important points are added in a historical dimension and an exploration of the theoretical positions(Norberg-Schulz, 1971, 1991; Lynch, 1998). This view is supported by Steele who wrote the experience that people perceive in the sense of place (Steele, 1981).

**Table 1:- Concepts of place**

Landscape elements in cultural context	Buildings	Landscape (as an	People's	People's	People's response	Cultural attractions	Transportation	Climate	Value	Accessibility	Social interaction	Notion of Place	Space	Image ability	Identity	Sense of place	
Visual ←			P	h	y	s	i	c	a	l							Spiritual →
Authors:																	
1. Matthew Carmona, Tim Heath, Taner Oc, Steve Tiesdell (2006)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2. Kevin Lynch (1988)	√		√	√	√		√		√	√	√	√	√	√			
3. Kevin Thwaites, Ian Simkins (2007)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4. Christian Norberg-Schulz (1971, 1991)		√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√		√	√		
5. Gordon Cullen (1971) Morrison (2013)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
6. Yi-Fu Tuan (Seventh printing, 2011)			√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√		√	√		

In brief, these theories and definitions clearly indicated that the sense of place and meaning of each of the terms referred to people’s experience, human response and people’s perception. In intermediate theories of place with more experience than the others belief is referred to people’s perception, people’s experience and human response. The studies of sense of place wrapped within the cultural landscapesettings are able to develop significant human behaviour and activities. Thevisual dimension reveals that significant relationship exists between an individual's

retain memories and their ability to recall the feeling stimulated in a sense of place in the forms of excitement, joy, and expansive.

#### **Sense of Place in Relation to Spiritual Dimension:-**

Several studies have also investigated the concept of sense of place, in relation to the spiritual dimension and how to retain unique sense of identity and place meaning within diverse geographical, cultural and spiritual settings. The concept of "sense of place" includes an association of the meaning and physical elements representing beliefs and about their memories. As an example, human experience cities and places from diverse cultural geography settings and at the same time explore on the idea of "what makes these places meaningful". Table 1 also shows studies that have considered the relationship of places and people's experience, people's perception and people's responses to the setting. Such experiences reflect Tuan's theories relating to human characters, how they form attachments to home and surroundings, their feelings about space and place affected by the sense of time.

Cullen (1971) argues on what makes "a unique sense of place". He expresses on the importance of individual townscape elements that should be designed as part of a whole (Cullen, 1971). Learning from the past, the pre-modern towns around the world usually necessitate the purpose of designing places not only to be used to facilitate daily activities, but also providing symbolic and affective qualities. The spiritual connection that is able to integrate people to the place. Some of the environmental psychologists also believe that the experience of place is one of the most important factors in intensifying a sense of place. The ideas of "spirit within the place" or character of place makes up the sense of place and how feelings are being stimulated; excited, joyous are also examples of this experience. A place is just not an object, it is an area full of promising experiences and meaningful activities. As a landscape architect, the author believes that experience of place is also felt through the interaction of five human senses such as sight, smell, taste, touch and hear. Carmona (2006) mentioned on the significant elements of what value is in urban design-economic, social and environmental. Thus, a relationship is formed between people and place inside a particular locality (Carmona, De Magalhães & Edwards, 2007).

#### **Sense of Place in Relation to Physical Dimension:-**

Table 1 reflects numbers of researchers discussing on the idea of physical dimensions, such as buildings that has become very popular topic in bringing up the character of the place. Malaysian community as an example, has grown up with significant patriotic history before and after independence in 1957. British occupation in Malaysia for example, has left significant built English cultural landscape characteristics that can be experienced in the old cities and towns around Malaysia. They are also available in films, articles and books reviewed and shaped our perceptions and expectations about places and tells us how to relate ourselves to these places. Preliminary works on physical and visual undertaken by Kevin Thwaites on how important the building heights in city design that are affecting image of the city (Thwaites, 2007). However, a number of studies have found that the idea of three dimensions has overarched from those three notable authors, such as Carmona, Cullen and Kevin.

In summary, the three dimensions of social, spiritual and physical have described the essential to be used as general factors in establishing the framework of behavioral studies on sense of place in the cultural context. In line with these dimensions understanding, Tuan (2011) highlighted the significant of localities that make the rise of human physiology and behaviour activity. The sense of being home is significant with place making, place relations, texture and culture.

#### **Content Analysis:-**

This study is based on prominent authors who have researched on a place theory as tabulated in Figure 1. Objectives of these selected research are mainly seeking and discovering people's experience, people's perception and people's response towards their surroundings based on elements that relate to people's relationships with places. However, several practical questions arise when dealing with place. Discussions on place are important since place is able to provide rich meanings for humankind. Tuan (2011) expresses the importance of culture learning to know the neighborhood that requires landmark significantly. The sense of place is strongly influenced by the existence of significant overwhelming image of the city that is rather unique for each city of different characters and culture. Lynch (1998) found a good relationship between people and place. It is the key to predict that sense of place can also be defined as a combination of physical (location of place), people's experience and the locality setting (Lynch, 1960).

Cullen (1971) argued that in order to achieve a unique sense of place, each part of the townscape should be designed with details that create a life of their own setting. They satisfy their needs through emotional response in landscape and urban settings through experiential approach. Indirectly, Cullen (1971) and Norberg-Schulz (1971, 1991) use terms such as 'spirit of place' or genius loci which has been transformed the Architectural Review passion into an analytical and design tool, such as a form of buildings, natural intangible elements; species of trees, water elements and so on and possess the area (Cullen, 1971; Norberg-Schulz, 1971, 1991).

Lynch (1960) explored the aspect of physical setting and its appropriateness in the city image. Each discipline tends to have its own favoured methods. By contrast, the perceptual theory holds that perception is indirect experiential landscape, but several approaches might be useful models. Books, articles, and others professional papers and relevant information from related internet websites remained high as the main sources for the research write-up. They have been used to establish the literature framework of this research. The collective literature and precedent review cater for future reference that will ensure the endurance and continuation of culture and place. The study has concluded that places that add value contribute to establish the urban setting and place context. Reference from the authors analyses compares various aspects of place and space, behaviour place and as place identity. Figure 1 presents an approach which is conventional in all situations. It is seen that little attention has been given to the understanding of place and space behaviour (Table 1).

	Experiential Place/Space	Cultural Place/Space	Behaviour Place/Space	Socio economic space
Authors:				
Matthew Carmona, Tim Heath, Taner Oc, Steve Tiesdell (2006)	Places	Places	Landmark, District, Path	Sites
Kevin Lynch (1960)	Places	Places	Landmark, District, Path	District
Kevin Thwaites, Ian Simkins (2007)	Places	Places	Landmark, District, Path	District
Christian Norberg-Schulz (1971, 1991)	Places	Places	Environments	Sites
Gordon Cullen (1971)	Spaces	Spaces	Spatial layouts	Landmark
Yi-Fu Tuan (Seventh printing, 2011)	Spaces	Spaces	Environments	Sites

**Figure 1:-**Summary of previous research of the different kinds of notions of places and space.

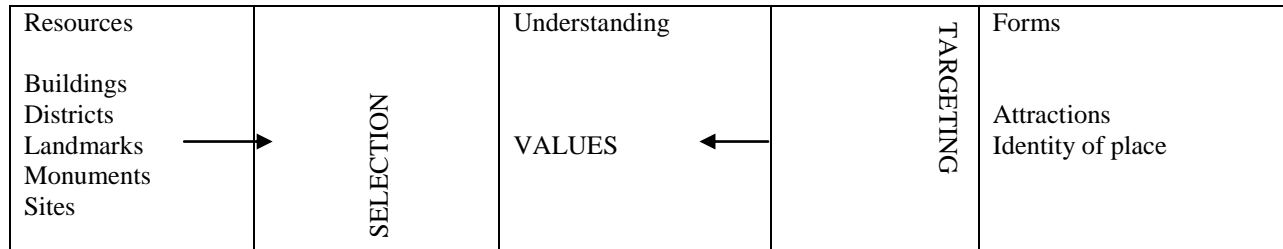
Based on the approach presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, most of the discussion and theory philosophy reviewed, theory and framework have been used to structure works and detailed in the findings. The study concluded places that add value contribute to establish the urban setting and place context. Literature reveals that a sense of place has different levels. These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of what other authors really means. It focusing on the basic components of a communicative study that have three different levels of scale as centre, direction, and transition and area using symbol. The paper deals with the existence of sense of place related to cultural variables, such as religious and ethnic background.

#### **The Factors Contributing to the Sense of Place:-**

Lynch (1960) explains that a contribution belongs to the first generation of works in environmental psychology and environmental behaviour. The combination of physical and social attributes creates the environment between people and environment from negative or positive aspects the place and the environment. Steele (1981) described that people tend to experience with certain setting from the strong character of the place. Tuan (2011) highlighted the people feeling of time and their surrounding such as home. The contributions from the outside professionals and inside users view differently. Carmona (2010) as a group researcher explained, in order to provide a broader understanding of good urban design, and preservation stressing on the nature setting. To suit various purposes such as the pattern of the place, the stories of place tell us the character of the place.

Lynch (1998) describes the method of environmental psychology included cognitive mapping as one of the components in a research study. As a result, there are varied senses of place between people and their experiences and their background. In addition, the place characteristics of the physical setting also influence the sense of place.

Thwaites and Ian (2007) stated the scale, centered, direction and transition area are most significant aspects of place character. Therefore, the reviewed literature has revealed that the physical features of place create the meaning and character that contribute to make sense of place. With the understanding of meanings and concepts, symbols and identity of place the bond becomes effective. Stedman (2002) argued that the sense of place is very difficult to define. Figure 2 shows the idea of five elements such as landmarks, districts, buildings, sites and monuments as necessary image visually needed, to test the mechanism and attributes of these elements for a city landscape.



**Figure 2:-**Processes of selecting and targeting in a sense of the notion of place

### Conclusion:-

Figure 2 shows the process of selecting and targeting of the sense of place relies on understanding of values. There is a good match between selection of resources and targeting the forms of attractions and identity of place. Altman claimed that as a place can be described as bonding people to places and is influenced by physical approach (Altman, 1992). A novel view of the degree of familiarity with a place plays an important role in a sense of place and place meaning in some of the studies reviewed. Familiarity includes recognizing by entering it or being there. The most likely explanation of is how human perception results in the similarity of some of the place in memory to visual impact.

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