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Defining Local Identity

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Abstract: This study provided a formal definition on local identity to clarify the confusion in the field of landscape study. The study first introduces different levels of identities in landscape research. Then reviews relevant definitions to identify their relations and common factors to clear confusions on local identity. The third extracts, formalizes and reorganizes the common factors into a new framework to represent elements that contribute to local identity and form a formal definition of local identity. The paper concludes by proposing a formal definition and framework of local identity, and their important meanings to both landscape research and practice.

Keywords: Local Identity, Landscape Identity, Sense of Place

Introduction:

Local identity is a vital component in urban development and acts as an important aspect to the quality of functionality in landscape. A good local identity is a major attraction for people and businesses as well as supporting cities in engineering social and economic transformation of the local site. Council of Europe (2000) pointed out that landscape is an important contributor to the quality of life for people, especially in local areas. A key aspect in building the distinctiveness with each area is to provide a better sense of identity and to help in the understanding of the identity of such a place. However, such identity has been lost due to the urban development process, and the loss of uniqueness has become a common problem that fast changing environment are facing.

In the urban development process, identity is the key to a subjective reality and all subjective realities are in a dialectic relation with the society (Christmann, 2003). It has been recognised as an important factor with which a city or region can build, modify or reshape a close relationship with their citizens and businesses through pride. Selman and Swanwick (2010) have suggested the importance of realising landscape uniqueness in modern landscape development processes to increase ties between residents and the environment. To identify the identities that are recognised by the citizen can help practitioners to improve the image of the place towards the desired quality, and therefore distinguish the city from other towns and regions in the global competition, which will enhance citizens' sense of belonging and attract skilled people and investments. However, due to the dynamic characteristics of the identity, it has not been defined precisely.

Identity is a production process with multiple levels and changes with surrounding factors, such as environment and time (Lin, 2002, Hall, 1997). Identity of a place is also viewed in relation to the historical heritage and the traditional characteristics of the region (Deffner, 2007). Therefore the local identity should provide continuity for development, preserving the traditions of local communities as the city changes over time; most importantly it provides possibilities for urban rehabilitation to develop a sense of home, security and community for the local residents. Moreover, Pritchard and Morgan (2001) used the relationship between culture, place identity and participants' representation to support that the view of local identity is a combination of historical,

social, economic and political processes. Various types of identity have been classified throughout time such as place, urban, regional, national, cultural, personal, community and landscape etc. All these identities have been proven to contribute to the identity of a local place. Such view has also increased the difficulty in differentiating the different identities, especially for local identity.

With globalisation, more academics and practitioners have realised the loss of distinctive urban identities and started to focus on smaller scale identities that would benefit the local citizens --- Local Identity. For example, Thwaites (2007) discussed the idea of improving urban sustainability by focusing on the development of small-scale community characteristics. However, there has not been a solid definition for local identity; the term is vaguely defined, and due to the diversification of all the literature on different aspects of identity, it is currently very hard for both academics and practitioners to identify the correct identity that they can focus on when developing urban places.

The goal of this essay is to focus on building the theory background of local identity. Relevant literatures are reviewed to help set up the theoretical concept for local identity. The confusion between different identities is cleared through solid literature review and a system is introduced to explain how each identity interacts with the others. The conceptual framework of local identity is built which helps to understand the structure of local identity and aspects that contribute to the term. This is important to the development of local identity in a way that it investigates the current different identities to develop the definition of local identity, and also it provides the theoretical support to categorise local identity into four different aspects, namely physical, social, sensory and memory.

Different Levels of Identity

One of the major difficulties in defining local identity is the different level of identities that have been developed in landscape studies. Such different levels of identities have caused confusion between each other. Concepts of national identity, regional identity, urban identity and ideas of local identity have been introduced with their different physical site scale (Dredge and Jenkins, 2003). Christmann (2003) introduced the different levels and identities and testified their unique focuses based on different physical scale and cultural differences. Some also mentioned smaller places that are incorporated within larger scales (Altman and Low, 1992, Relph, 1976, Tuan, 1974). However, the boundaries between these different levels of identities are not clearly clarified; therefore it is important to separate out these different levels first to distinguish local identity from a fundamental perspective.

National Identity

National identity as a concept is logically inseparable from concepts such as nation and nationalism. They are rooted in a common history and particularly strong in terms of group social identity. Hence, evoking strong emotional reactions (Lewicka, 2011). Besides national identity can take many forms, objects and events, monuments and ceremonies, all contribute meaningful symbols to the national identity (Vale, 2008). National identity is a natural process that needs a considerable amount of time and history to accumulate and evolve. Mentality is the main factor of it with two dimensions: cultural and political. (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2010). The number of common attributes that contribute to the national identity also have the ability to strengthen the bond of national people: blood ties; race; language; region; religion and custom.(Stebelsky, 1994).

Regional Identity

Regional identity has been defined as a special kind of phenomenon that is formed throughout historical and territorial socialisation (Raagmaa, 2002). The word 'region' is well known as a common definition for a set area that a group of people commonly uses. However there is no agreement as to what scale of territory may be covered by it (Pollard, 1998). Most researchers understand the term as "social constructs" (Paasi, 2010). The regional identities are 'mental' products of societies interact with their physical and social environment and the mental reflection of the space in people's mind and memories (Raagmaa, 2002, Paasi, 2003) Regional identity may also place emphasis on local cultural or regional peculiarity, sometimes even expressed in political and cultural actions. It is expressed in many different ways, for example, Paasi (1986) identifies in his four shapes model in regional identity formation: territorial, symbolic, institutional and socio-spatial consciousness shapes. Hence, from a regional level, identity includes the participation of the region in physical, cultural and social life. However, the process of discovering identity at a regional level is far too big as it is hard for people to experience (Tuan, 1977).

Urban Identity

Urban identity starts to focus on smaller scaled landscapes compare with the previous two identities. It is one of the essential parameters in achieving a good living environment as it encourages people to care and feel responsible for the environment that belongs to them (Oktay, 2002). Because cities are constantly changing, and evolving new forms, the complex interaction between natural, social and built elements has created urban identity (Oktay, 2005). The most significant determinant of the urban identity is the local urban context that is formed by all physical and natural elements, in particular the urban environment created over generations. Besides, the term is highly related to the residence's living period: the longer one has lived in the city, the more attached they feel to it (Lalli, 1992). Similar to national and regional identity, urban identity is also viewed as a development of local characteristics through history, but from a much smaller scale which involves more interactions between the local environment and its residents. And there are differences in people's experiences of surrounding environments, which will influence their feelings to the urban living place (Oktay, 2005). Hence, it is not only considered from the historically significant buildings, but also through the evolution of the local urban context with respect to human activity, built form and nature, which are also significant in the creation of 'a sense of place'.

Local Identity

To investigate even further into the detail on identities, similar idea of local identities is developed. The concept of identity in many researches across different academic fields is not so much related to the whole city, on the contrary, it is used together mainly with urban parts and neighboring settlements. The concept has been developed as early as the mid-nineties, Lynch (1960) has defined a quarter as the place that has calm and safe streets, accessibility to daily business that proved capable to support one's life on a day-to-day basis, and such capability of providing necessary services is considered as an identity. Later on, Zube (1991) claimed that one cannot understand global phenomena without looking into the local dimension, which brought the focus of landscape identity to a much smaller scale which is more closely involved with citizens' life. Many researchers have used the "neighborhood" to describe such topic (Bonaiuto et al., 1999). And street and quarters are common scales that have been focused on in the field (Moughtin, 1992). This is because they normally play an important role due to the identical qualities played in people's day-to-day life; hence it is influential on the image of a city and orientation of people. As such, streets are the most dominant elements in the forming of the city image and therefore the design needs to pay particular attention to them (Lynch, 1960). 75% of the works done with residential place attachment researches have used neighborhood as their primary research site (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001, Lewicka, 2010, Lewicka, 2011). In essence, local identity is identity that

represents a small-scaled place, e.g. city quarter or street level, to provide residents with feelings of calm, safety and pride while they live at the place. It is the components that distinguish both the place and residents themselves to the other places and present a strong independent image for which people can develop strong identification and affection from. However, there has still been no formal definition of the term.

Distinguishing Different Levels of Identities

For all levels of identities are phenomena where people identify themselves with a certain scale of region with its people, culture, traditions, landscape, etc. The bigger the area represented on the map, the bigger the role of symbolic aspects of the environment. Figure 1 shows the difference and relationships between these different levels of identities that are reviewed:

National identity focuses on the symbols of blood ties, races, language and regions, where the area or region is commonly identified as a country or a nation. Whereas the regional identity focuses more on the level of how people interact with their environment from a smaller scale compared to a country and people’s lives in the same region tend to share a similar language and religion, a province for example. In spite of the forming process from a historical heritage point of view, regional identity focus on a more narrative range of people compared with national identity. The urban identity narrows the area down further from a regional level to a more specific city level. E.g., the city of Sheffield is an urban place in the region of Yorkshire. Urban identity focuses more on how local people interact and therefore forms its own identity, which then forms the regional identity. As regional identity could be vaguely defined, urban identity can be very specific in a city level. Finally, local identity acts as a basic principle for all three former identities. It focuses on people who participate in a very narrative scale of area, e.g. a neighborhood in a city. Such identity acts as the principle that constructs the urban identity. It focuses on how people, who live in their own community, interact with the local environment and further divides the urban identity into small sections, therefore making it easier to identify and evaluate.

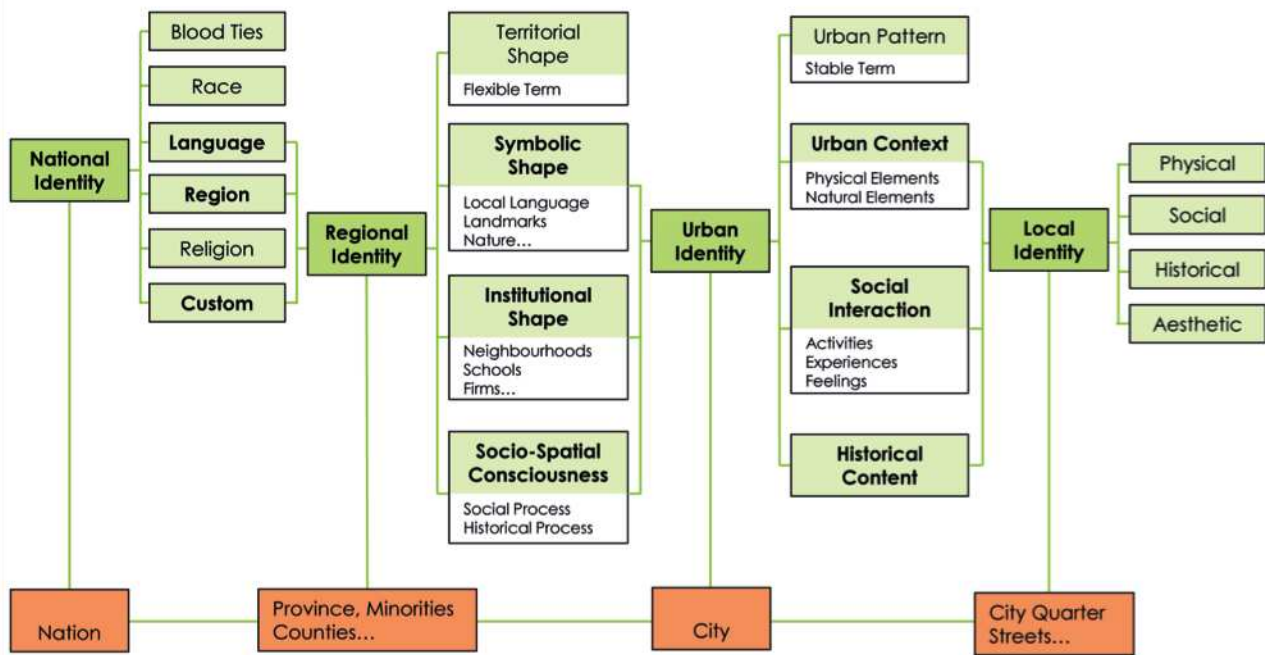


Figure 1 Different level of identities in landscape study

Related Definitions of Local Identity

The definition of the term “local identity” has been ambiguous in the past; the lack of a formal definition makes it hard to recognise such an identity. However, other terms have been introduced that describe similar ideas of local identity, which focus on developing an identity that applies to a small-scaled place, for example a city quarter or a street. These identities all describe a subset or an aspect of local identity by different researchers. Reviewing these identities helps to extract and analyse the common and distinctive features from each of them in order to evaluate and form a true definition of local identity.

Place Identity and Place Attachment

Places are formed by the physical form, activity and meaning (Montgomery, 1998). Among them, meaning is concerned as individuals own psychological and social processes that provide perception (Stedman, 2002).

Place identity is an important factor to enhance the quality of urban life in cities that embrace environmental, economic and social aspects (Proshansky, 1978). It is developed when a place is viewed as a significant part of life by the residents and able to fulfill their behavioral goals better than any alternatives (Lynch, 1981, Williams et al., 1992, Stedman, 2002). On the other hand, it is the connection between people and a collection of “memories, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about physical settings as well as types of settings” (Proshansky et al., 1983). Therefore local identity should have at least two aspects: continuity and uniqueness.

Place attachment is an affective bond that people establish with specific areas where they prefer to remain and where they feel comfortable and safe (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001, Altman and Low, 1992, Williams et al., 1992). The term has been commonly related to place identity (Proshansky et al., 1983), because it helps to tighten the behavioral relationships between people and their environment (Cuba and Hummon, 1993). However, place attachment does not always focus on positive feelings, as it might also include negative feelings on the surroundings (Hernández et al., 2007).

Although place identity and place attachment have been defined ambiguously, they both share common aspects that link them to each other. Proshansky (1978) has evaluated the place identity from three aspects: cognitive, affective and objective. The cognitive aspect focuses on the attributes of physical space, e.g. color, size, distance, and the conscious beliefs of how to use a particular place (Proshansky et al., 1983). The affective aspect emphasises the ‘feelings and preferences’ of a particular place, such as sight, smell or sound. Whereas the objective requirements concentrate on how one can use the functionality provided by the place identity. Through literature review, this study summarized 4 aspects of place identity and place attachment:

- Physical Appearance, which change throughout time (Lynch, 1960).
- Individual Experiences and History (Lewicka, 2005).
- Functionality: Ability to satisfy diverse user’s activities. (Jacobs, 1961, Montgomery, 1998)
- User Interaction: Influenced by racial, ethnic or class identity (Rose, 1995).

Therefore it is easy to see that place attachment and place identity are two concepts that frequently overlap due to the samples used in most of the research (Hernández et al., 2007). However, the two terms share two common concepts: an affective dimension that is the emotional bond between people and place, and a cognitive dimension related to the physical space that influences people’s lives (Rollero and De Piccoli, 2010).

Personal Identity

Originally the term is related to how people recognise one another by their appearance and a bond to personal history and experiences (Williams, 1973, Locke, 1975, Hume, 1896). For example, a person will be seen as having his own personal identity if he had a unique physical appearance; feels differently on the same subject; or behaves differently from other people due to his unique life experiences. In essence, it is how people recognise the world and makes each other unique through their interaction with the surrounding world from both a physical and spiritual aspect.

Later on, Proshansky (1978) further differentiated the personal identity in landscape study to how people “feel” about the surrounding environment through their feelings with the physical world and life experiences. It represents the extent to which individuals believe the landscape informs their self-identity and also allows people to both personalise the environment to better suit their functional needs and allow the place identity to shift according to people’s requirements (Proshansky et al., 1983). Hence it is not hard to see that people’s identity is highly related to the physical environment and individuals often identify with places that reflect their own uniqueness (Kyle et al., 2004).

The major aspect of personal identity focuses on the personal feelings gained from two concepts:

- The Five Senses of Human Nature (Proshansky, 1978, Sickels, 1868).
The senses by which people distinguish objects via the physical observation through their physical feelings which are: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling.
- The Memory of Earlier Experiences (Locke, 1975).
The feelings gained through their own experiences, which focus on the consciousness over a period of time. Therefore, when facing or feeling certain familiar environments, the environment would act as a trigger for people to recall their memories.

Although personal identity is related to general place identity in the physical terms, which reflect citizens’ unique experiences of the place in the particular environment as well as others living in their unique regions (Proshansky, 1978).

Culture Identity

Culture form the local character and the identity. Krause (2001) supported this point by introducing the idea that landscape does not only have spatial and structural characteristics, but also that cultural aesthetic expressions play an important role in landscape image and identity development. A city is within the integrity of the cultural meaning and significance of its region. The cultural integrity is influential in the development of the city; it is related to the historical events and it cannot be separated from its historical past. It is a collective treasure of the local community and is normally expressed through physical and spiritual heritage, e.g. monuments, historical sites and local festivals.

Cultural identity is strongly related to people’s personal identity; it makes citizens proud of their local heritage and identifies themselves with their towns. Cultural heritage serves to develop a positive image to external people as a unique location factor in the global competition. Throughout the historical time frame, culture has largely embedded into people’s memory, therefore, memory plays an important role in the cultural identity. Not only the person-environment interaction contributes to the place bond, but also the memories of those experiences and memories of significant events, stories or people all contribute significantly to building the places identity (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). Besides, social memories are also deeply embedded in local history, which contributes to the distinctiveness of the local place (Conway, 1997, Devine-Wright and Lyons, 1997). Different people, different ethnic or religious groups will also have different memories, even at the same place, and they all contribute to the place’s distinctiveness and continuity in time.

Community Identity

Community is described as “a set of people with various kinds of shared elements, which can vary from a situation such as living in a particular place, to other interests, beliefs or values” (Obst and White, 2005). Each community has their own characters, which leads to different landscape characteristics (James and Gittins, 2007). Thompson and Travlou (2007) in their book “Open Space : People Space” provided empirical evidence of the benefits people could gain via interaction with local natural resources, but failed to provide sufficient findings to assess such interactions in practice. It is the environments and events that link the past with the present resulting in a felt sense of coherence (Cuba and Hummon, 1993). Swanwick (2009) also suggested that communities are formed via physical and social interaction between humans and landscapes, such society factor are one of the major factors that affect the preferences for landscapes.

Besides, During community landscape changes, e.g. two communities merged together due to the development expansion, people tend to only support changes that enhanced a sense of locality in which landscapes act as a connection between people and their environment (Stewart et al., 2004). Another general finding is that long-term residents in the community tend to have the highest indicators of attachment and identity, which can be related to the history and memories of their life at the place (Goudy, 1990, Rowles, 1990). Meanwhile, community identity is a reflection of heritage. In such sense, landscape features may improve new elements, but if they are not linked to the core community values, e.g. community culture, such elements have a risk of destroying community identity (Stokowski, 1996).

Sense of Place

Sense of place is one of many characteristics that developed through the interactions between people and local identity; it is a measure of the psychological comfort of people at a particular place. Altman and Low (1992) referenced the term as how people become emotionally involved in places in which they have a sense of belonging. It is also described as the distinctiveness that emerges from the particular histories or environment at the local place. It is not only an important factor concerning the modern landscape planning process that maintain and forms the community’s special places but also a good estimator of how people will interact with the surrounding environment (Kaltenborn and Bjerke, 2002).

Sense of place is a multidimensional construct representing beliefs, emotions and behavioral commitments concerning a particular geographic setting (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2006). It has been viewed as a concept of place identity, incorporated with place attachment (Proshansky et al., 1983), which refers to connections based on activities that take place in a setting, reflecting the importance of a place in providing support to people’s needs, it is usually associated with people’s self-fulfillment through place experiences (Schreyer et al., 1981). The term also indicates that residents who have lived longer in a place are more likely to have developed significant relationships with other residents as well as the surrounding environment (Lalli, 1992).

Sense of place has four distinctive factors: continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem and self-efficacy; a robust sense of place helps people to integrate their surrounding environment, attracts newcomers and makes people feel proud to live there (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). A vast amount of research has also been carried out on interoperating the factors that contribute to the sense of place:

- Physical appearance and human perception (Stedman, 2003a, Shamai, 1991, Vogt and Marans, 2004).
- Geographical characteristics (Brown et al., 2002, Norton and Hannon, 1997).

- Residence history (Relph, 1976, Tuan, 1977).
- Individual's preferences (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001).
- Activities carried out at the place (Eisenhauer et al, 2000).
- Environmental relationship with the residents (Kaltenborn and Bjerke, 2002).

Sense of place is expected to embed with people and nature, thereby contributing to the aesthetic quality of the landscape (Cross et al., 2011, Walker and Ryan, 2008, Stedman, 2003b). It is not only an interaction between people and the geographic characteristics, but also dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory with surrounding natural resources (Stokowski, 2002). Although natural resource is a traditional source for understanding sense of place, the paradigm places would have greater emphasis on the interaction with subjective, emotional and symbolic natural places and personal bonds (Williams and Vaske, 2003).

Landscape Identity

Landscape identity is a social and personal construction in which the physical features of the area are components in the construction process (Haartsen et al., 2000, Turner, 2006). There are also different scale landscape identities such as place, region, county or country, whereby larger scales contain smaller ones (Stobbelaar and Hendriks, 2004). Due to the fact that people contribute to landscape identities from social and cultural aspects, landscape identity has been seen to unite inhabitants to each other and also distinguish them from other areas (Haartsen et al., 2000). Landscape is also considered from the past to the future, history and future considerations also played an important role in defining the landscape identity.

Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) have identified two major identities that contribute to the landscape identity:

- **Existential Identity**
This is the interaction between human and physical environment (Mansvelt and Pedroli, 2003) which they declare also be known as "place identity". The main focus is how people absorb the physical aspect of local environment.
- **Spatial Identity**
Focusing on how people can merge into the landscape, dwelling in it, and existentially perceiving its inheritance (Stobbelaar and Hendriks, 2004). The identity is also known as landscape character (Antrop, 1998). On the spatial scale, spatial identity has been partitioned into place identity and regional identity level (Mucher and Wascher, 2007), with place identity referring to a smaller scale in the landscape, particularly to striking, unique or historical objects that attracts people's attention.

Other Related Works

As one of those cities that are losing their unique identity during the modernization. The Chinese landscape research field has also carried out various researches that related to the term. However, the current domestic academic researches on local characteristics tend to focus more on the understanding of foreign research and practice analysis. For example, Lu Xiaohui (2012) takes Thompson's research as an example to discuss the importance of constructing urban characteristics. Ye Jing et al. (2014) measured the literature on "urban characteristics" published in Web of Science from 1998 to 2013. They analyzes and summarizes the international literature on the "city characteristics" of the theme of knowledge and characteristics. Sheng Tingting and Yang Zhao (2015) have carried out the academic review to the sense of place and summarized its research frame; Huang Xiang, Bao Jigang and Geoffrey (2006) have carried on the frame research to the place attachment; Zhu Hong , Liu Bo (2011) carried out a review and explanation of the three theories, emphasizing that place attachment will affect place identity, both of which contribute to

the construction of sense of place. It can be seen that among all the works there is no detailed research and exploration to form an original theory of local identity.

Common Factors and Relations between Different Identities

From the above literature review on relevant identities to local identity, local identity can be summarised as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the small-scaled place, e.g. a city street that is distinguishable from another. Each different identity is inter-related with another, and together, they form a systematic circulation that explains the entire structure of local identity as shown in Figure 2.

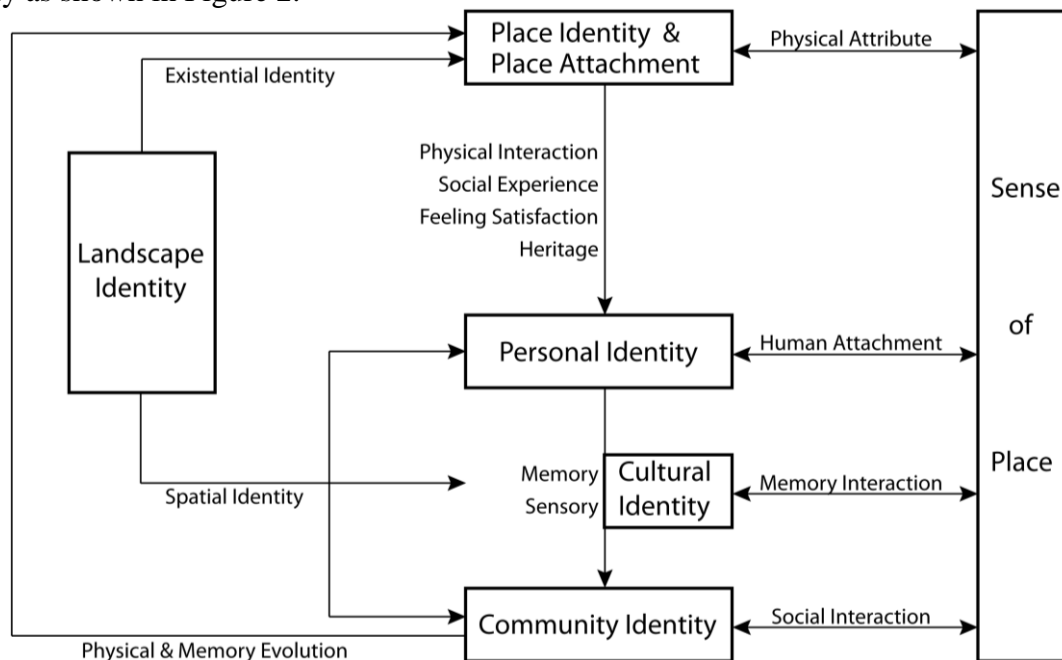


Figure 2 Relationships between Different Identities

To explain, landscape identity is the overall general term that includes all other identities as its sub-identities, and it has different levels of identities such as regional level and local level. All our literature is focused on the local level of the landscape identity.

At a local level, Place Identity/Attachment is the identity that focuses on more fundamental issues, such as physical interaction, social experiences, residents’ feelings of satisfaction and historical heritage. With these aspects together, they influence personal identity, which also concerns the interaction of people and the environment but more importantly emphasises how people “feel” about the local area, and can be affected by both sensory and memory aspects of experience of the local place.

Because cultural identity focuses on the historical heritage effect of the local area in people’s memory it has an interaction with the memory aspect of personal identity. Together with personal identity, they would help to form a “community” and the community identity, and evolve community identity.

During the process of the evolution of community identity, both physical and memory will be improved to better satisfy people’s needs and preference, hence a better interaction across all aspects between physical environment and people will be established, thus improving place identity/attachment. In such a way, a systematic circulation is formed.

Besides, sense of place is a measure of psychological comfort of people at a certain place, examining surrounding environment, feeling and preference, social, historical and cultural influence, and landscape and nature meanings. Different aspect has ability to connect with other different

relevant identities. Each link acts as a bridge that incorporates the two sides. Similarly, landscape identity's existential identity and place identity both focus on physical aspect, and its spatial identity focus on interaction, human preference, historical heritage which related to other identities.

Aspects of Local Identity

The idea of interaction between human, place and space from different perspectives to derive a better quality of living environment was also mentioned by Thwaites and Simkins (2007). In their book "Experiential Landscape", they suggested a deeper understanding of interaction between human and environment from multiple dimensions can ultimately feed in to the dynamic change of the evolvement of local uniqueness. Overall the essay has formed the relationship between different identities. And then all the effective factors of different identities could be summarised into four aspects: physical, social, sensory and memory, which are the common aspects of local level's identity

Physical Aspect

Although there has been much debate on the difference between place identity, sense of place and landscape identity, they all focus on one major concept: the interaction between humans and the physical environment, from both a physical observation and a spiritual feeling aspect. In all of the relative identities, major literatures have all mentioned the concept of "physical environment has a large influence on local people's feelings and how they view their identity to the place". Therefore it is obvious that physical aspect is truly a major aspect in local identity.

Social Aspect

Users are the key attribute of urban places. Although each landscape could have its own physical uniqueness, without users who see and use the identity, the term "local identity" would lose its meaning. In all the major literature on local identity, the authors all mentioned that local identity is not only about how physical environment contributes to the people but also how people contribute to the environment to make the place more attractive and distinguished to the outside world, from the latter prospective, social activity has been seen as an important way in which local people interact with their place to make it unique (Lynch, 1960, Altman and Low, 1992, Stedman, 2003a, Proshansky et al., 1983, Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001, Stedman, 2002, Zube, 1991). In the background of globalisation where major cities start to look alike, social activity becomes a main force that could distinguish different landscapes from one another, not only between different regions in macro level, but also between different areas in the same city.

Sensory Aspect

Places can be special to certain people because their biography is linked to these places (Pretty et al., 2003). Every human being has their own life experience in the past, composed the local landscape with their own personal meaning; in this research, this is referred to as sensory. The sensory significance of a landscape lies in the associations with the sites. As users are a key attribute of urban places, local identity is not only about the uniqueness of the physical place and its functionality, but also the ability to provide psychological comfort (Jacobs, 1961, Carmona et al, 2003). Based on different experiences and habits, each individual user would feel differently regarding one place. They normally dramatically influence the interactions between the user and the environment. It is a feedback from both physical and spiritual interaction between humans and the environment, it provides a measure of how people attach to the area, and also an important foundation of how local identity evolves from time to time.

Memory Aspect

The modern development of local identity focuses on the uniqueness of a micro area, such as a city or a district. Such an area is within the integrity of the cultural meanings as it is a product of residents' daily activities. An important part of an area is its inheritance from its past, which is a benefit of a traditional community having long dwelt there (Oktay, 2005). This is usually expressed through physical and spiritual heritage, historical sites and monuments for example. In principle, these tangible aspects are all a reflection of and extracted from people's memory. Although various literature has been discussed the bias in the social memories and people's personal memory, as they tend to be reinterpreted and filtered from history (Liu et al., 2009, Lewicka, 2008), the importance of memory in the local identity forming process is unshakable. It is clear that culture and history all remain in people's memory, and based on these factors each region will develop their uniqueness from both physical and spiritual (social and sensory) aspects

Interactions between Different Aspects

As the essay has extracted and categorised different terminologies into four aspects, they are now all involved in four aspects, and a new conceptual framework is evolved by showing the interaction between each aspect (Figure 3).

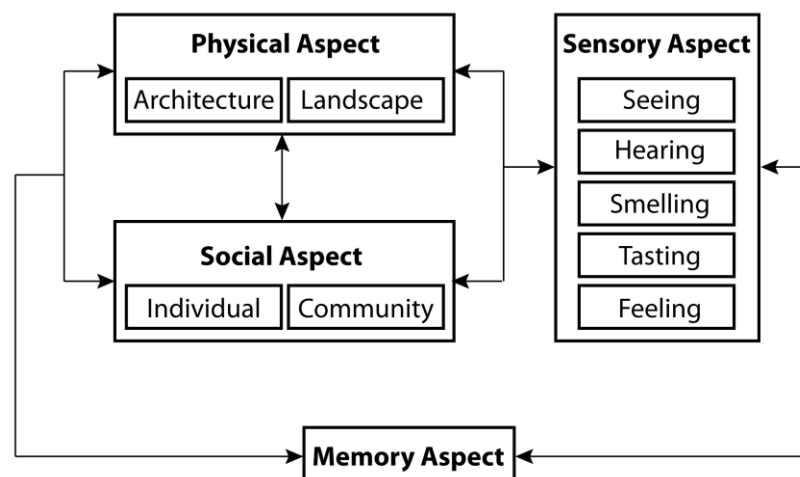


Figure 3 Conceptual Framework of Local Identity

- The physical aspect has a great impact on the social aspect due to human activity taking place at the site.
- Physical and social aspects can influence sensory aspect due to the senses generated when activities are carried out at the physical site.
- Physical, social and sensory aspects work together to create the memory aspect throughout local history, this is because when local people carry out their daily activities at the local site, throughout time, it gives them a special sensory feeling and memories.
- Finally, people would tailor the place to better suit their daily activities or enhance the place to protect their precious sensory feelings and memory, therefore the physical aspect would evolve via the mutual effect of the other three aspects together.

Through this framework, local identity is formed and evolved throughout time from the interaction between its four aspects. Such findings reflect the original findings on the relative literature on local identity, but from a more standardised and crystalised perspective. The way in which the local identity is formed, contributed and influenced is clearly expressed. More importantly it reflects the key nature of local identity --- its uniqueness is derived from people's daily interactions with the local place throughout time.

The Practicality and Meanings of Local Identity

The relevant findings are all developed in previous sections, it is now vital to understand their practicality and how to apply them to produce better urban design results.

The claim for local identity is that it is an effective indication by which to engage various aspects' elements to provide distinguishable uniqueness of a local site and increase the bond between places and people. This work has found that in the modern urban design process, vast amounts of local identity are being lost due to the effect of globalisation. Because of the various terms of identity, practitioners failed to understand the true meanings of the unique elements at the site they are working on, hence resulting in similar city images. China, as a good example, is losing its local identity at a dramatic pace, while copying western successful city design experiences. One of the major reasons is the lack of formal definitions on the term "local identity". The various definitions related to local identity also cause confusion. Therefore, by investigating and summarising all the relevant identities, this research has proposed a formal definition and framework of local identity that could clear out the confusion and potentially act as a guideline for practitioners to use, which allows for a deep understanding of what local identity is and its importance within the urban development process.

The research has defined local identity as the identity that could provide distinctive features to small-scaled places, including both positive and negative preferences of people. The local identity contains four aspects: physical, social, sensory and memory aspects. Each aspect focuses on a specific perspective that was summarised from the relevant identities defined in other literatures. Therefore the local identity does not only tell practitioners the definition of local identity but also provides great potential for future landscape study works and helps to clear up certain confusion between similar identities definitions. Therefore, this research has unified the different terms and structures related to the term "local identity".

Academically, the theoretical development of local identity should not only address the understanding of local identity concepts but should also address the importance of such understanding in regard to the theoretical development in landscape study. The theory building nature of the research has provided a deep understanding of the term, which can help academics to focus on the micro level of their research study on local identities in order to contribute to the overall literature of local identity. Together with the methodology, it allows academics to testify their findings on either the individual aspects or the overall perspective of local identity.

Practically, the thesis has clarified that a good understanding of local identity can help them to realise the true needs of local people therefore enhancing their development. Furthermore, the thesis framework provides a rigorous way for them to evaluate local identities to assess their development. The theory would not only helps practitioners to prevent negative impact development, identify and enhance the positive local identity elements, but also provides them with the ability to identify potential opportunities to integrate the popular ones to derive new local identity, which reflects another main point of the research --- local identity can evolve, or even create new identity through constant interaction between people and the environment.

Further more, local identity theory would help urban designers to better understand the local site and provide a guideline for what they are designing. And would inspire and provide the ability to designers to choose the purpose of their design, plus a detailed evaluation of their design.

Conclusion

Identities, which are formed by various elements of the region, create a bond between the surrounding environment and its citizens through pride or other unique feelings. It has multiple levels and different aspects. Local identity is more specifically focused on a local level, e.g. city street or city quarter, which acts as the fundamental level and forms other levels of identities (E.g. city level, regional level and national level).

Despite the fact that there are different focuses in local uniqueness from different researchers, this essay has summarised and reorganised their perceptions into a new framework of local identity that forms a basic of local identity in practice. Hence, the principles of local identity with diverse aspects contain a variety of local identity features to connect people and the environment, such as physical, social, sensory, and memory. Therefore, it is proven that the effect of human-place interaction on local identity is from four different aspects, which allows local identity to be investigated from a more detailed and rational way (include both positive and negative preferences). Hence, helping to understand, from a more specific level, how local identity is important to the quality of life for different people in urban development, which could help to achieve better development goals and contribute to the protection of local identity in future.

Based on the above fact, as a formal way to define and unify the meaning of local identity, the essay proposes below definition. However, due to the originality of this essay, this definition can be viewed as provisional and has the potential to be further developed and refined.

Local identity represents small-scale places, such as city quarters or street level, to provide features that create a recognisable image of the place and its residents to differentiate from other places. It provides special feelings through physical, social, sensory and memory perspectives; such feelings include both positive and negative emotions.

Hence, the theory development in this essay has unified relevant concepts that are closely related to local identity and have influential meanings to the term, in both theoretical and practical notions; helps to clear up certain confusion between similar identities definitions and extracted the common factors in order to form a formal definition and conceptual framework of local identity, which contribute to the overall literature of local identity.

With this clear definition and conceptual framework, it can be used as a guideline for both academics and practitioners to better understanding local identity and its importance, and also provide a foundation for further identify and assess such local identities. The essay believes the findings can contribute to the solution of resolving the current identity loss of cities globally and help to deliver a better living environment that people feel more attached to.

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