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Article:
Addas, A. and Rishbeth, C. (2018) The transnational Gulf City: Saudi and migrant values of public open spaces in Jeddah. Landscape Research, 43 (7). pp. 939-951. ISSN: 0142-6397

https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2018.1427709

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THE TRANSNATIONAL GULF CITY: SAUDI AND MIGRANT VALUES OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES IN JEDDAH

Urban greenspace, Saudi Arabia, migration, place attachment, parks, wellbeing, memory, nature, gender, recreation.

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines patterns of use, perceived benefits and place attachment relating to public open space in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, a city in which almost half the residents are born overseas. The methods included case studies representing different recreational landscape typologies, observational analysis and 85 on-site interviews (46% Saudi, 54% migrants). The findings outline the benefits of visiting as a retreat from busy lifestyles, for everyday sociability, for improving health, for religious practice and for mutual support, highlighting dimensions of gender, transnationality and heritage. The paper explores place attachment related to displacement comparing between impacts of migration and of rapid urbanisation. The narratives suggest that experiences shaped by temporality and memory inform emotional geographies for both Saudi and migrant residents. There are differences in patterns of use between resident groups, but the paper concludes that, within a highly stratified society, the public open spaces of Jeddah provide an important resource of shared pleasures and everyday multiculture.

INTRODUCTION

While there is developing academic critique of the impact of migration on public spaces in a range of contexts (Hou, 2013; Wise and Velayutham, 2009) the sites of interest rarely extend beyond a Western conception of a cosmopolitan metropolis, often informed by a colonial past and a notion of the 'other' as differentiated against an English-speaking, culturally Christian norm. This paper addresses Jeddah, a historic city in Saudi Arabia, characterised by rapid urbanisation and urban sprawl (Aljoufie et al., 2013), with high levels of migrant residents (numerically almost equal to non-migrants) who in the main share a religion, Islam, and a common language, Arabic. The paper contributes to two areas of research: how values and practices of recreation are informed by this social and geographic context, and how emotional connections and place attachments are expressed in times of personal and collective change.

Through both these themes, the transnational profile of the population allows an inquiry that connects to debates on how patterns of migration and settlement shape experience of urban landscapes.

This transnational context is specifically interesting in terms of values relating to, and use of, public open space. Using public outdoor places is widely understood to provide multiple benefits to urban residents, having restorative qualities, providing space for socialising (increased privacy or facilitating larger groups), supporting exercise, allowing and users to feel part of a wider community (Cooper et al., 2014). There are a number of studies that suggest different patterns of use relating to ethnic background or migration history (Peters, 2010; Kloek et al., 2013). Conducting ethnographic research on parks in neighbourhoods characterised by diverse populations, Neal et al., (2015) suggest that outdoor greenspaces are important sites of 'inclusive openness', supporting affinities across ethnic and cultural difference. Kloek et al (2015) highlights some of the complexities of understanding immigrant participation in outdoor leisure, noting the impact of discrimination and some differences in patterns of use but calling for research with more specifically addresses context (p.56). Byrne and Wolch (2009), addressing ethnic differentiation in park use (primarily in the USA), critique theories of marginality, race/ethnicity, assimilation and acculturation, and discrimination (p.749), and call for a conceptual model that allows for a more spatially explicit understanding incorporating historical and cultural perspectives. Engaging with theories of place attachment and migration allows an engagement with themes of connection and disconnection shaped by memories of distant places and lost environments.

The scope of this paper is therefore defined both by typology, that of urban public spaces primarily with a recreational purpose, and by social benefits and values, as enacted and shaped within the public sphere. The research addresses two questions. First, what differences can be discerned between Saudi and migrant residents in Jeddah in relation to their use of outdoor public spaces? Second, how is place attachment and values of public space shaped by displacement? Two forms of displacement are explored, that of international migration, and that of rapid urbanisation, addressing similarities and diversity in expressions of memory and transnational connections.

PUBLIC SPACE USE IN ARABIC CONTEXTS

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest Gulf State by area, and of note internationally for a dynastic political regime, state wealth from oil export, and the significant role of Islam in shaping law. In comparison to other Gulf countries, gender segregation is strictly enforced with differentiated citizenship (requiring 'guardianship' of women by men). There are impacts on public open space, including compulsory wearing of the hijab in public spaces, a ban on women driving, some areas of the city being designated as 'women-only' (van Geel, 2016), and restrictions on male single-gender friendship groups fully accessing some public spaces such as shopping malls. Political and social change is taking place in Saudi society (Haykel et al., 2015), and Aljaouhari (2013) argues that Saudi young women are engaging in interactions between rebellion and obedience, in part through negotiation of urban public spaces.

Jeddah is a pertinent case study for interrogating the impacts of historic culture, religion, and migration in urban places. A historic spice-trading city, it has been a place of settlement for 2,500 years, and has significance as a gateway to the city of Makkah (Mecca). Jeddah is rapidly urbanising, with a population which has risen from 2.8 million (2004) to 4 million (2014), and predicted to reach 5 million by 2029 (CDS, 2010). It is a city shaped by globalisation dynamics; the urban population is currently 52% Saudi nationals and 48% non-Saudi nationals. The vast majority of migrants are construction industry and service sector workers, usually from countries with predominantly Muslim populations (Lebanon, Philippines, Egypt, Indonesia, India, Pakistan). Migrant workers in Saudi Arabia often work long hours for low pay, and there are accounts of exploitation and an increase in racism (Migrant Rights, 2013) .

Reviews of the value of different typologies of 'urban greenspace' (Kabisch et al., 2015; Wolch at al, 2014, Konijnendijk et al, 2013) demonstrate that there is limited critique with regard to both the quality 'green' and the temporality and cultures of recreation in a region characterised by extreme heat, arid ecologies and specific codes of behaviour in the public realm, in particular with regard to gender and religious practice. It is relevant to give an overview of relevant contexts prior to examining the findings of the research. Rapid urban growth combined with the lack of a strong professional steer relating to public space design and management has led to a significant under-provision of recreational public open space (Mandeli, 2010), and at the neighbourhood scale there is very limited opportunity for outdoor recreation (Alijoufie et al., 2013; Mandeli, 2010). However, residents travel, usually by car,

to enjoy a number of public parks and squares across the city. In many respects, these bear resemblance to parks across the world: trees, grass (sometimes sand or sand/grass mix), play and sports facilities and seating areas. There are a few specific typologies of recreational outdoor spaces which are common within Gulf state countries but a-typical in European and other western contexts. The first is the extent of the waterfront, the Corniche, which has been developed as publicly accessible linear space stretching both south (25km) and north (58km) from the city centre, including a prestigious public art programme. The second is the desert, which abuts the eastern edge of the city, and provides an extensive recreational zone, very different in character to designed public spaces but fulfilling a similar function in terms of socialising and contact with nature. The third typology is small incidental areas that are informally appropriated for recreation: roadside verges, roundabouts and pavements. These are commonly used for sitting out, eating and playing, and can be argued to provide a corrective to 'inefficient land use and irrational design of public spaces' (Ben-Hamouche, 2013, p129).

The profile both everyday landscapes and everyday multiculture in the Saudi urban context differs in key respects to North American and European contexts. This research therefore provides contrasting critique of the value of public spaces within a 'differently diverse' society, and has relevance beyond academia given the common pattern of high-value prestige landscape design contracts being awarded to 'global' practices[1], with potentially limited levels of understanding and sensitivity to Saudi culture and the migrant experience. This paper questions how these public spaces are valued by Saudi nationals and by residents born abroad, migrants who may share or have different leisure practices, memories and culturally-informed preferences.

PLACE ATTACHMENT, DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION.

'Place attachment' is a theory that explores emotional bonds between people and place, asserting that these can shape meaning, instil a sense of local belonging, reflect personal identity and influence action (Lewicka, 2011). The quality, strength, and interrelations of these have been addressed across many disciplinary fields and inform theory, methods and applications for practice (Altman and Low, 1992; Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014). This paper explicitly addresses the articulation of place attachments shaped by emotional geographies of place and belonging. A methodological approach focused on on-site narratives,

intersecting personal histories and typologies of place, led to a foregrounding of emotional landscape typologies specifically in relation to displacement and disconnection (Nold, 2009; Rishbeth and Powell, 2013). How are outdoor places articulated as emblematic of memory in ethnically diverse urban contexts, and how does understanding these attachments express aspects of belonging or loss within both Saudi and migrant communities?

This paper aims to specifically explore intersections and differences between transcultural place attachment and disruption of place attachment due to urban change. Displacement is a theme of research on place attachment and migration (Fullilove, 1996; Fried, 2000; Gustafson, 2001). The distance between home countries and new environments, and the process of becoming 'at home' is shaped by 'memories, beliefs, meaning, and knowledge that individuals associate with their central settings [and] make them personally important' (Scannell and Gifford, 2010, p.3). Rishbeth and Powell (2013), in their research with first generation migrants and experiences of place discuss the role of memory embodied and evoked by urban environments as not solely a form of nostalgia, but an process in which the local and the transnational are reconciled by engagement. They suggest the need for integrated understandings of place perception and activity in urban landscape, and argue that actions of returning, appropriating or re-creating after loss (or change) can combine with responses to place to strengthen local attachments. Manzo (2005) supports the emotional resonances of this, focusing on the positive process of connection-making: 'new places provide linkages to past places, events and people by building emotional and psychological ''bridges'' which helped create and maintain a sense of continuity and wholeness in people's lives' (p.78).

However, this theme is not exclusive to the migrant experience, and is also reflected in research on cultural processes of urban change and memories of the past (Lewicka, 2008; Mah, 2009), and as such may be relevant to native Jeddah residents, who live in a city with on-going expansion and a soaring population. While Lewicka's work on memory of historic neighbourhoods in Polish cities is shaped by a very different political history, (Lewicka, 2008), her discussion on autobiographical and collective memory is pertinent, indicating that stronger emotional geographies are connected to significant events, or times that required adaptation, or values shaped in periods of identity formation (p213). Scannell and Gifford (2015) propose a notion of places a 'safe havens', a way of conceptualising places as providing a reprieve from stress and a sense of anchoring in times of difficult changes (also Fried, 2000).

Manzo (2005) expresses the complexities of attachments as potentially positive and negative, embraces the importance of both 'home' and 'journeying' (p83). How distinct is this notion of retreat in relation to a dynamic of 'making bridges'? Are these two processes of place attachment mutually supportive or in tension, and how are these expressed through different personal histories displacement (migration and place-change)? The findings of this research are shaped by these questions and build on conceptions of place attachments as emotional instincts that are multiple and simultaneous (Bonnett and Alexander, 2013; Manzo, 2005). By focusing on narratives of loss and joy, they draw together the national and the international, and the past and the present, in both communities.

METHODOLOGY

The landscape specificity of the research questions shaped a methodological approach which would allow critique and theorisation not only of social-spatial qualities, but also giving attention to the materiality and the mundane production of urban spaces that is often neglected by sociologists and social geographers (Koch and Latham, 2011). Investigating place as an integration of form and cultural practice directed an approach which used on-site narrative methods to elicit the complexity of place attachment.

After an initial process of scoping of public open space typologies and choice of case study sites, the research had two fieldwork stages: case study observations, and on-site interviewing. These took place from 2011 to 2012, and intensively in two periods (December to May, August to October) including some additional observations during Ramadan.

Case study observations - Nine locations case study were chosen, distributed across the city and representing a range of recreational typologies,. These included including extensive recreational landscapes (waterfront and desert) and intensive urban landscapes, both designed (parks, gardens, and squares) and incidental (pavements, road-edges, tunnels, and roundabouts). Observations on multiple visits focused on activity by different users, and related this to the physical features and temporalities of the location. Pre-coded record sheets, photography and on-site mapping were used to capture this data.

On-site qualitative interviews - In addition to the common dilemmas of undertaking qualitative interview methods with diverse participants and the discussion of often-unconsidered aspects of everyday life, the Saudi context is one of relative unfamiliarity with social science research and academic interviews. To address these challenges, an approach was developed which combined interviewing techniques based on free association (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), with the 'site as prompt' nature of situated fieldwork. As explored in Finney and Rishbeth (2006), on-site narratives can both prompt clarity of logistics (length of time spent, food consumed, reasons for visit) alongside an invitation to reflect on the nuances of and relationships between past and present, the 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005, p130), thus drawing out "the 'experience-in-place' that creates meaning" (Manzo, 2005, p74).

The eighty-five interviews allowed for diversity across the different sites and with participants differing by nationality, gender and age. The selection of participants was representative of Saudi and non-Saudi residents, and also of the degree of heterogeneity and intersectionality within cultural groups, ensuring that commonly marginalised voices (women, non-Saudis, and older people) were given due emphasis. The field researcher was a Saudi male in his twenties who was a native Jeddah resident. On-site identification of open space users to approach for interview was based on the researcher's experience in identifying the nationalities of users according to their appearance, and this was clarified verbally. In Saudi Arabia, it is generally unacceptable for men to approach women in public spaces, therefore a female member of the researcher's family accompanied the researcher. Interviews were conducted in Arabic or English, audio recorded and later transcribed and translated if necessary.

Overview of interview participants - The participants were 58% male, 42% female. Of the 85 participants, 39 (46%) were of Saudi nationality, with others giving their nationality as Egyptian (11), Syrian (7), Lebanese (7), Jordanian (4), Sudanese (4), and the remaining thirteen migrating from South Africa, Chad, United Arab Emirates, USA, Palestine, Yemen, and the Philippines. 92% of those interviewed gave their religion as Muslim. 72% of the people interviewed were young to middle-aged adults (between 25 and 54), 15% were older than this and 5% were younger (children were not interviewed).

Data analysis - Observational data (field notes and mapping) was synthesised and analysed alongside on-site interviewing, combining to create a rich mix of material that allowed the analysis of interview transcripts to be grounded in the specificities of urban form and appropriation – the bench, the shade of the tree, the picnic mat. Initial coding focused on tangible classifications within the data - locations, activities and social contexts - followed by more iterative coding of values and motivations leading to a thematic analysis combining emotional geographies with landscape typologies.

VALUES AND BENEFITS OF URBAN PUBLIC OPEN SPACE FOR SAUDI AND MIGRANT RESIDENTS

In this section, findings are presented that explore the values expressed regarding public open space use, drawing out similarities and differences between Saudi and non-Saudi residents,. The structure for this draws inspiration from frameworks of motivations for visiting urban greenspace (e.g. 'Enjoy nature', 'Social encounter with family/friends', 'Relax', 'Forget daily life' and 'Sports/Health', Kloek et al, 2015, p53). However the situated nature of the fieldwork and an analytical focus on integrative and embodied experience of place meant that integrating descriptions headline these findings, connecting values of use with typologies of place, allowing close attention to the significance of context (Kloek et al, 2015). Within these core themes, dimensions of gender, transnationality and heritage as changing over time are highlighted.

Parks as a retreat – Residents of Jeddah from a range of ethnic backgrounds described the benefit of visiting parks and public spaces predominantly in contrast to the busy schedules and routines of their non-leisure time. The built-up areas of the city were described as an '*artificial life*' [Syrian male, 30-40], where one was '*surrounded by walls*' [Saudi female, 20-

30]. Nearly all interviewees perceived urban green spaces as natural in comparison and as having restorative benefits: '*the urban blocks are having a bad influence on our lives; the only place that can help us to feed our emotions is nature*' [Egyptian male, 50-60]. There was an interesting combination of idealism and realism, an acknowledgement that these spaces are vital but far from perfect. '*Seeing the sea, birds, trees and the grass can help me to relax and enjoy even if it's not designed and maintained like western places*' [Saudi female, 20-30].

Socialising outdoors - Residents of all nationalities tend to gather primarily in family and friendship groups, with seating arrangements segregation by gender in Saudi groups. Appropriation of a spot for a longer period of time often involves a range of props bought from home: portable chairs and tables, cards, a ball or food, sometimes involving cooking in situ. Incidental areas, roadsides and walkways are more commonly used by groups of male friends, playing cards and sharing food, but late afternoons and weekends can see the inclusion of family groups with children playing in the sand. A park in a high-income, predominantly Saudi, residential area of the city was infrequently used by residents, but was significant as a hanging out spot for the local workforce of drivers and guards, mostly migrants from India, the Philippines and Indonesia, to play cards, smoke and eat together. The high temperatures over many months of the year mean that late afternoon into evening and night-time use of parks is common. Social gatherings, such as dinner parties, matches and games take place after the Isha Prayer, usually between 8pm and midnight.

Health practices allied with individual autonomy - The use of public open space for improving physical health is relatively uncommon in Saudi culture. Hot weather, high car use and the lack of health education is seen as contributing to low levels of physical activity (WHO, 2005), with additional sociocultural factors relating to women such limitation on movements outside the home and wearing of the hijab (Samara et al., 2015), and an emphasis for young people on study and spiritual activities rather than sport (Murphy, 2013). However, recent research with female university students, (Samara et al., 2015) suggests that the greatest hindrance (at least within well-educated sectors) is the lack of facilities for physical activity, rather than political or cultural constraints.

The use of the 'Hilton walkway' in Jeddah appears to support this assertion. This walkway is the central reservation of a main road, and in 2003 was redesigned to include a 5m wide,

1.5km long walkway, with additional facilities such as a playground, palm trees, seating areas and sculptures. The design of the walkway legitimises physical activity for both men and women, and it is a very popular place to walk in Jeddah. Many women offered the range of benefits they gained from walking here: '*fresh air and oxygen*' [Lebanese female 30-40], to '*lose weight*' [Saudi female 20-30] and for the purpose of '*socialising*' [Egyptian female 30-40]. This highlights some aspects of cultural change in Saudi Arabia. A Saudi man [40-50] reported that in the past '*people would make fun if they saw someone walking outdoors,*' and this shift was noted more widely: '*walking outdoors became a part of my life and I am really happy that society is not preventing us from doing this*' [Saudi female 20-30]. The critical mass of users of the walkway was also important: '*to be present in public places where we see a large group of women who are walking outside makes us feel safe, and that we have freedom and that we belong to the community*' [Saudi female, 20-30]. Walking outdoors for Saudi women is one way to increase independence without conflicting with conservative norms, and for some allows development of a more egalitarian sense of belonging in the public realm and more broadly within Saudi society (Aljaouhari, 2013).

Religious practice - Gender difference is prominent in the use of public outdoor places for prayer. As the call to prayer sounds out over Jeddah five times a day, men in outdoor places will instinctively make informal groupings for the prayer ritual, temporarily bridging ethnic and class divides. Some men prefer praying outside, feeling the spiritual dimension of being within nature, though there can be logistical problems regarding the direction of Makkah and washing before prayers. In the central Al Mahmal Square, long rugs are laid out in rows to enable praying on a clean surface. Women also pray discretely within public open spaces. Temporality of a more seasonal nature is witnessed in the urban quietness of Ramadan fasting times, the late night buzz of the daily breaking of the fast, and the significant, sometimes overwhelming increase in religious tourists (usually en-route to Makkah) during Ramadan, causing the roads to be gridlocked. After the Taraweeh evening prayer, parks and squares - especially in the old city and the Corniche - are filled with festive throngs of families and friendship groups.

Being outdoors as a restorative context for mutual support - The research found that, in many respects, migrant residents' use of public open spaces followed a similar pattern to that of Saudis. Times of day and week were comparable, gathering in family and friendship groups and eating outdoors were all commonly noted. The Corniche is a relevant example of

this, with Saudi and migrant family and friendship groups nearly always separate, but essentially enjoying the space alongside each other (Neal et al., 2015). There were some activities that distinguished the different ethnic groups: Yemeni and Filipino men fishing and groups of Indian boys playing cricket.

More broadly within the interviews with migrant public space users, there surfaced themes of mutual support and a distinctive social network that is separate from Saudi residents, and it is useful to address this interconnection of socialising, valuing nature and transcultural memories through a specific site. The Al-Rawdah Gardens, a two-hectare public garden situated northeast of the city centre in a district that is 54% non-Saudi residents, is a popular destination for migrants in family groups to socialise, rest and play. Children climb over the play equipment and kick about a football alongside a fenced court where young Filipino men often play basketball. There are very few Saudi users. Interviewees from Syria, Lebanon and Jordon discussed how they valued this park specifically because it allowed them to make friends and meet with other migrants. During one fieldwork visit, a Lebanese family in the Gardens prepared a barbeque and invited everyone to share their food. The mother said, '*all the people here are from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, and I feel happy to share my food with them, because we are from the same region, and I feel like I am at home and all the other users are my guests*'. Users of this garden appreciated its plants, sculptures and play facilities, but a number also noted the absence of Saudi users, who are perceived as being careless in their use of public spaces. In one Jordanian family the father stated, '*Saudi society does not know how to use spaces and public parks, and Saudis users do not care for the place*'. The quality of the site was appreciated, the only site in the study where complaints were not made regarding the design and maintenance (usually concerning lack of facilities, presence of litter, problems of parking). The observations from this site inform an understanding of outdoor intercultural sociability between migrant users from a range of nationalities, but without engaging with Saudi residents.

LONGING AND JOY: PLACE ATTACHMENTS SHAPED BY CULTURAL MEMORY AND TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Wood and Waite's (2011) discussion of the 'the ways in which individuals negotiate multi-layered, contested or competing senses of belonging at a range of spatial scales' (2001, p.201) is relevant in addressing embodied experiences of using outdoor places. Within this section,

the focus of the findings is the entwining of joy and longing with relation to temporality, memory and place, and how this shapes place attachment for both Saudi and migrant residents. This is explored primarily through a notional framework of emotional landscape typologies: the freedom of the desert, the garden that is like home, viewpoints of loss.

The desert as a longing for simplicity and freedom - All cities in Saudi Arabia exist in stark contrast to the surrounding mass of the desert. Despite the rapid urbanisation and civic control that informs Saudi society at all levels, there remains an intimate relationship between the people and the desert, rooted in a traditional oral culture that often reflects the qualities of the landscape. Though not within the city boundary, desert visits are pertinent to this research as they are intrinsic to Saudi patterns of recreation, and shape preferences and contrasts with the designed open spaces in the urban areas.

When the seasons turns to winter, families drive together to the desert '*to sit on the sand dunes, which have turned dark because of the rain, or to build tents and light fires to spend a night of quiet within the confines of the stars and the moon*' [Saudi male, 40-50]. The sense of isolation is important: '*the atmosphere of the past, the simple life in the desert, to be far from all aspects of civil and urban development, being alone with myself*' [Saudi male, 30-40]. There are important gendered dimensions to this freedom. Due to the distance between different family encampments, women are allowed to dress without a hijab as if in the privacy of her home: '*there are no rules except nature's rules*' [Saudi woman, 30-40]. The men roar around on motorbikes and smoke around the parked cars. But for both men and women, a cultural connection with the desert is articulated as a spiritual yearning, the scale of the environment evoking a sense of wonder to '*live in a moment of hope in the ability and greatness of the Creator*' [Saudi male, 40-50]. A number of interviewees talked about how they collected objects from the desert to take back to the city '*a stone which I can use in my room as a decoration or sometimes, and don't laugh, I used to take some of the sand. I like it, because it makes me remember that place and anything that smells natural and make me feels free*' [Saudi male, 30-40]. The ritual of visiting the desert, of habitually setting up camp in the same locations, of actions that allow a suspension of normal codes of behaviour, all shape a deep attachment to a less materialistic past, a connection with cultural nuances of religion, and a restorative engagement with a collected family grouping.

The garden that is like home - Values of sociability are useful in understanding migrant connections to the Al-Rawdah gardens, but another significant theme raised by many interviewees in this site was how it evokes memories of their home countries. '*The greenery and trees do not make me feel I am in Saudi Arabia. As you know, Lebanon is known for its greenery and natural beauty. This site gives us these feelings*' [Lebanese female, 30-40]. '*I love this place. I feel like I am in Siran with my family with the green surrounding us and the sky is blue. It really looks like the natural areas in Syria*' [Syrian female, 40-50]. The quantity and quality of the planting on the site, is characterised by many users as 'natural' and prompts a joyful connection to plants and vegetated recreational places in their home countries, a reflective nostalgia with the power to shape a sense of belonging within a new environment (Boym, 2001; Rishbeth and Finney, 2006).

Though the Al-Rawdah Gardens was the place where transnational memories and attachments were most commonly volunteered, a number of migrant interviewees pointed out natural elements in other locations (often trees identified by species), and the pleasure of recognising these elements as corresponding to those growing in a home country. A connection with the sea was fundamental to many: '*water makes me feel as if I am in Alexandria, it is the same water and sky; the difference is the location, but I totally feel at home*' [Egyptian male, 20-30] an instinctive emotional connection with an extensive view, and one in which the very material of the view literally and emotionally connects with shores in the home country.

Viewpoints of loss – Places trigger memories in ways that can emphasise loss and longing, and in the case of some interviewees, this was specifically embodied by the public spaces of Jeddah. The Al Mahmal square, in the historic core of Jeddah, is a well-known meeting point for migrants and Saudis. For many, it holds important childhood memories of a smaller, traditional Jeddah, a historic connection especially for older residents. An elderly Saudi woman, Jeddah-born but recently moved to Makkah, visited this place every weekend with her adult children '*I encourage my kids to come to this place, because it was here that I and their father grew up, and it might be after we die they can still come to this place to remember us*'. Both the civic and the personal history of the place are important,

> *This place has a special spirit […] Unfortunately, this spirit will be forgotten and my children and grandchildren will not know anything about it, because there is nothing*

representing this history. I hope that God forgives the municipality and all the people who are destroying our heritage and history.

Another older woman in the plaza, a Yemeni by birth and nationality, recounted similar attachments related to childhood memories:

I remember myself and my sisters, how we used to play and live our lives here… I still love the simplicity, such as walking in the alleys with my sisters and mother and how I first met my husband. My feeling and emotions are here in old Jeddah.

Historic locations have the potential to be collective markers of time passing, held in common by residents of different nationalities (Armstrong, 2004; Rishbeth and Powell, 2013), though also representative of a shared loss shaped by urban development.

Other losses are more personal yet also representative of past connections to particular places. One of the interviewees, a Saudi woman in her late thirties, was sat looking out to sea in the Aljafali Mosque garden in central Jeddah. This is a site for capital punishment at specific times of the year (but otherwise functions as a public park primarily used by migrants) and it transpired that her husband was executed here many years ago. '*I come to this place every Friday. I grieve here. I come here just to read the Qur'an and pray for him. God please his soul*'. Her place attachment was multi-layered, informed by harsh memories but also actively appropriated by her as a place of connection. By bringing her religious practice of reading the Qur'an, into a public place, she deliberately rejected the privacy of a domestic space. She found for herself a '*peaceful*' moment, but not an isolated one. '*I prefer to do it here in front of the sea. I feel closer and feel more related*'. She found the space, a site of violent death, to have a conflicted identity, contrasting with the play facilities and seaside promenade.

In a crowded city, views over the sea were of value both to the Saudi widow, the Egyptian from Alexandria, and to others needing moments of reflection. A long car journey, five hours round trip, was made every day by an older Saudi woman in the company of her Indonesian servant ('*she is like a sister to me*'). They sit and look out at the sea from the same spot on the Corniche. The woman was also grieving, though with more joyful positive attachments to this place which was important to her late mother. '*I feel relaxed when I look at the sea and I*

remember my mother's stories and every single detail she was talking about with me. The sea can take you to different places in your mind'. The attachment was to this micro-location and to particular recollections of memorable times, but also stretches into the extensive horizon view and facilitates a connection with nature.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This concluding section discusses the relevance in relation to the two aims of this paper, understanding diversity and similarities of open space use between migrants and Saudi residents, and developing theory on place attachment in times and locations of displacement and place change. Within both these ambitions the overarching interest in the transnational city is foregrounded, a conceptual lens which can challenge notions of a singular normality with regard to place value.

Firstly, the study of public open space use and values by different residents, highlighting in particular migrant/non-migrant backgrounds and gender, allows an insight into diversity of recreation in a country characterised by an arid climate, comprehensive state regulation regarding conduct in the public realm, a predominantly Muslim population, and high levels of economic migration. The findings demonstrate that motivations for visiting commonly evidenced in European and North American literature (e.g. Kloek et al, 2015: nature contact, social gathering, relaxing, retreat from daily life and health and activity related reasons) certainly resonate, but take on specific temporalities and emphasis shaped by climate, culture and religion.

A geographic and culturally specific analysis of recreational landscapes needs to integrate the recording of public space use (including precision in spatial and temporal patterns) with emotional connections and personal histories that shape individual and collective values (Low, 2000). The custom of men praying outdoors is noticeable in many countries with Muslim majority populations. Not observable, but revealed by the interviews, are female practices of outdoor praying, and the evoking of broader spiritual connections in places such the desert and the sea edge. In attending to expression of meaning, health practices such as urban leisure walking can be understood as representative of a growing sense of sporadic autonomy for some Saudi women, and for non-Saudi nationalities bringing food to parks can

support loose social ties and a tacit interdependence. In this paper, the analysis of values and benefits of public space in Jeddah captures some of these practices.

Attending more closely to emotional geographies relating to place has highlighted some of the ways in which intersectionality of personal identity (ethnicity, gender, status) shapes values of recreation in public open space, and that these are reflected in context specific ways responding to the provision and qualities of public open space. What the significance of shared recreational spaces in a society in which nearly all proximity between Saudis and migrants is limited by prescriptive hierarchical relationships as employers and domestic staff or hired labourers? Does the range of nationalities and mix of activities inherently shape a commonplace diversity (Wessendorf, 2014), albeit one lacking the support of political cohesion agendas that may be instrumental in Europe or northern America?

While the purpose of this research was not to undertake a comparative study, the findings shape an overview of migrant use of public space in a Saudi context which is both different from and supportive of common theorisations of ethnic diversity in urban outdoor settings as developed in North America and Europe. There was evidence of territorial groupings within some spaces (Al-Rawdah Gardens, the desert) and parallel socialising within others (the Corniche, the Hilton Walkway). The findings didn't reveal a clear pattern of marginalisation (Byrne and Wolch, 2009), or of 'under-participation' (concurring with Kloek et al, 2015), while the lack of incidental interaction between Saudis and non-Saudis indicates that parks mostly do not primarily function as sites for social integration (Peters, 2010). The interviews did not specifically uncovered narratives of discrimination of migrants (Gobster, 1998; Kloek et al, 2015; Peters, 2010) though it would be naïve to expect this not to shape migrant experiences in some form. What is evident is that the public open spaces of Jeddah, however limited in quantity and quality, do provide a vital resource supporting wellbeing for both Saudi and migrant residents. These may be the only places in the city where, in a suspension of the normal rules, the multicultural population of the city is both visible and equal in the simple pleasures of time spent outdoors (Neal et al, 2015), and provides a glimpse of 'society being represented' (Peters, 2010, p.428).

Secondly, the conceptual framing of this research is one that develops understandings of emotional bonds with places, addressing specifically the role and development of attachment despite and through experiences of displacement.

Engaging with cultural memories and finding 'bridges to the past' was important (Manzo, 2006; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). For those who have lived all or most of their lives in Jeddah, even younger adults, this city is not the city of their childhood. There is a longing for emotional relief from the rapid expansion and the density of the built environment, combined with the stress of daily life. Many Saudis find restoration in the grandeur and simple rituals of time in the desert, and for others traces of heritage in the old city at least give a focus for narratives that mourn change. Migrant residents, also under pressure from relentless work patterns and by having to adjust to significant displacement from a country of birth, find that these civic 'third place' locations – not work, not accommodation – give them respite, a connection with a collective society, points of recognition, and a connection with home (Rishbeth and Powell, 2013). Across both these groups and in many of the public spaces, the seemingly universal joys of children playing, of sharing food, and of gazing out over the sea, enable a commonality of 'elective leisure' (Neal et al., 2015).

Scannell and Gifford's discussion of places as 'safe havens' in times of change (2014, p26), where one can 'retreat from threats, problem-solve and gain emotional relief' unexpectedly appears pertinent across both Saudi's and migrants residents. The findings imply that attachment to places, and particular typologies of place, can shape a personal connection with personal, social and physical urban change that extends this notion of 'safe havens'. Place attachment becomes not just a means of retreat but also a form of expert noticing, of participation with a broader public, and at times a method of engaging with negative emotions (Manzo, 2005). These arguably fashion not only a means of 'getting-by', but contexts for emotionally connecting with 'bridges to the past' that allows an articulation of loss, but is not overwhelmed by it. The expression of longing and joy as prompted by experiences of specific places in Jeddah often seemed to engage simultaneously with notions of 'home' as a form of belonging, and 'journeying' as a means of acknowledging change (ibid, p83).

The empirical discussions in this paper shed light on how different forms of displacement can become embedded and enacted in specific places, and are intrinsic to understanding diverse

forms of belonging in this transnational city. This research has been able to make some tentative comparisons between experiences of place attachment shaped different forms displacement, both by mobilities and urban change (Gustafson, 2001; Lewicka, 2008). It highlights the relevance of place and autobiographical memories (Knez, 2006) – not as a 'sentimental longing' but a 'powerful psychological tool on which people spontaneously rely in order to restore self-continuity disrupted by major life turns' (Lewicka, 2014, p53). The materialities and temporalities of public open spaces are shown to give important insight into the everyday life in Jeddah. Through the diverse uses and collective value of these public open spaces the contemporary dynamics of transcultural urbanism are rooted in the here and now, giving imaginative space to both the simultaneity and the individuality of 'stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005, p130).

ENDNOTES

1. Atkins (Jeddah Waterfront) http://www.atkinsglobal.com/en/projects/jeddah-waterfront Kamphans (North Corniche) http://www.kamphans.com/waterfrontdevelopment.

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