

Whose Sense of Place? Re-thinking Place Concept and Urban Heritage Conservation in Social Media Era

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Abstract. A change in a conservation approach that is now more focused on the conservation of a place than on a single object has placed an understanding of a place as an important concept that must be understood in urban heritage planning. However, the urban place perspective has been shifted, as a result of the change of attitude of people living in the urban area due to the rising of social media. This paper argues the concept of place in the heritage conservation planning, especially in the area designed to be tourism objects, which needs to be revisited. The very dynamic urban people as a result of technology and information must be considered. In order to understand the man-place relationship, the sense of place concept is the most common concept used and in the current context of heritage conservation, the review of place concept could be traced by understanding who is the owner of a sense of place in the social media era. In the current academic literature, the common discourse says the local community as the owner of the sense of place because visitors have limited chance to own the sense of place. This paper also argues that the shift of place perspective due to social media could be the catalyst in creating a strong sense of place for visitors. To support the argument, this paper uses the study of Concept of Mediatization and Concept of Parochial that have successfully explained how social media provides indirect experience based on people-place interaction and a sense of familiarity of an unknown or strange place. Therefore, this paper states that in the sense of place context: (1) the experience factor, as one of the factors in the creation of a sense of place, does not need to be physically experienced but it can be built based on other person's personal reflection. It also gives an opportunity to make a self-interpretation about the value of the heritage place; (2) sense of familiarity, which is believed to be owned by the locals only due to the period of staying in the area, can be owned by persons who have never visited the place. That is why when the tourists come to visit the heritage place with their own interpretation of experience built previously they are very potential to have a strong sense of place when doing activities in such short time of visit. In the context of heritage planning, this change will certainly have an impact on (1) the change of the stakeholder mapping of urban heritage area conservation, and (2) the change of place-making concept in an effort to conserve the public space of heritage areas, where heritage planning needs to make room for digital dimension contribution as one form of advancement in information technology that has become the urban lifestyle of today.

1. Introduction

The heritage conservation approach has now undergone a change of view in considering the objects to be preserved. The conservation concept that was originally static (in the form of



archaeological objects) is now dynamic with a wider scope covering the environment, areas, and even cities [1]. The understanding of the issue of historical object conservation has changed, from only the protection of structures to the protection of places, of which the scope is wider and more significant for the community. Coleman [2] stated that conservation at the present is not only related to physical changes but also acts as an effort to create a new relationship between tangible and intangible aspects where the quality and success of this relationship are important for the sustainability of conservation.

As a place, the existence of heritage areas contributes to creating a sense of place which is one important factor to form a city's identity. The historic environment has a resonance in creating a sense of place and cultural identity which contributes to the quality of the environment in which people live and work [3]. Cohen [4] also said that by questioning the sense of place of a heritage area is also one way to measure the quality of heritage conservation in the urban area. In order to make a successful heritage conservation program, Orbasli [5] stressed the importance of public involvement in the program, including the local people, property owner, business and other people who benefit from the area. Therefore, in the conservation effort of heritage areas, the focus on urban community as the users and their interrelation with places that have become the locations of their dwellings or activities is crucial to do because humans are one of the decisive factors in the success of a conservation activity. This paper argues that the importance of understanding the existence of sense of place in urban heritage areas can begin from the knowledge of who the actual owner of that certain sense of place is, although Jiven and Larkham [6] explained that there is still a lot of debate about who actually the owner of sense of place is in the context of heritage areas as a place.

On the other hand, the existence of social media, as a result of the development and progress of communication and information technology, has influenced the behavior of urban community in the public space, including how they perceive a place. New media and information and communication technology are influencing the way that we develop social networks; understand places and location [7]. By combining the two issues, namely the issue of owner's sense of place in urban heritage areas and the issue of urban community's activity changes due to the influence of social media, this paper seeks to review the concept of place in urban heritage areas. This paper also seeks to see its effect on the ownership of sense of place and the conservation effort of urban heritage areas in social media era.

This paper is the results of a descriptive analysis library research using a systematic review methodology to synthesize the secondary data used.

2. Literature Review

According to Seamon [8], the meaning of place is considered to play a role in shaping human experience while Bott et al. [9] wrote: "The relationship to a place is a fundamental feature of human existence". Therefore, place-based knowledge will be an important foundation for institutionalizing adaptive management and human awareness of place as well as a reference to comprehend the changes that will be posed to the environment and their impacts on humans. For that, this literature review discusses the position of a place in planning and the perspective shifting of place due to the influence of social media:

2.1. The Complexity of Place in Planning

According to Trancik [10], a place is formed if it has a contextual meaning which is derived from the local or regional content, whereas Tuan [11] believed that the structure of a place without humans is only a geographic location, so the concept of place is only significant when there is human existence. To complete Trancik and Tuan, Canter in [12] referred to Relph's theory stated that place is a function of 'activities' plus 'physical attributes' plus 'conceptions'.

Even though the concept of place is difficult to be limited in one discipline, Castello [13] wrote that "place is a well-accepted theoretical construct of the areas of spatial studies". Therefore, an analysis of place should be able to help understanding the spatiality of a city through the life in the urban space. Puren et al. [14] explained that in the end, spatial discipline must be involved in applying the concept of place through place-making activity, which is an effort to create the quality of

a place so that it can be integrated with the planning of the built environment. In that effort, intangible aspects like meanings and values should be included in the formulation of spatial guidelines [14].

Understanding the concept of place in spatial planning means understanding the culture and characteristics and hallmark of urban space so that it can be considered in planning, for example in an effort to provide an intimate space to its inhabitants. However, Graham and Healey [15] questioned the concept of place in the context of spatial planning, especially in urban areas, with the question: "In a world of tumultuous economic, social, cultural, technological and physical change, how can we best conceptualize the dynamics of places and the role of planning action in shaping them? With globalization apparently 'stretching' and deepening the relations between places, tying them into multiple webs of capital, technology, data and services, human interaction, and ways of thinking, at proliferating spatial scales, how might spatial planners translate new understandings of socio-spatial relations into their practices?" Criticizing the classical approach, Graham and Healey [15] argued that the approach to the concept of place in planning practice should be done with a new approach, based on relational constructs which are dynamic, rather than the Euclidean approach, deterministic, which has only one dimension, the legacy of thought from a scientific approach in the 1960s and early 1970s. Therefore, as long as urban space is still thought in terms of a city-centred view of space as an object and is still often conceptualized as the 'container' to limit the activities occurring there, Graham and Healey [15] argued that ultimately planning practices have difficulty in capturing the dynamics of complex contemporary urban changes.

In the context of heritage planning, Fredholm [16] stated that complexity of heritage values in the city and regional development have not been adopted by the planners who tend to think that technical problems can be solved using rational decision. Forester [17] said, in reality, planning that only considers physical and standard rules fails to address the problems within the society and is considered as a traditional type of planning that does not fit with the dynamic of the people. Critics on urban heritage planning are actually based on the idea that it should be focused on the value of the place itself related to the culture.

The question is how to understand the place itself. Jorgensen and Stedman [18] state that despite a number of theories on the relationship between spatial setting and human, the Sense of Place Concept is the most common one used to explain the existence of place. In conservation, the attempt to explain the sense of place with historical character is seen to be more important than detail restoration of the urban physical element in urban conservation [19]. The traditional approach in conservation that only focuses on buildings preservation on conservation list will fail to save urban heritage and urban sense of place [see [20][21]]. Martokusumo and Zulkaidi [22] address the needs conservation focus that relates to the application of a sense of place concept in the main urban area, to create strong conservation program that is sustainable as well. However, Jorgensen and Stedman [18] admit that the relationship between place construction theories is not easy to understand. Despite some of the relationships that have been studied, still, it is difficult to reach universal agreement on place concept.

2.2. The Perspective of Place in the Social Media Era

The challenge of information and communication technology that is still evolving as of today has made its impact on the perspective of place and the effort to translate that understanding into the planning practice continues to be a debate. Wilken [23] argued for the need to examine "the way that mobile media influence and shape places and place experience, and the way that mobile phone use is integrated into the flows of everyday life". Abdel-Aziz et al. [24] stated that there is an opinion that the advances in information and telecommunication technology have led to the activities in the public space beginning to decrease, due to information being easily accessible from home using the internet.

In their paper, Abdel-Aziz et al. [24] divided the Information and communication technology (ICT) into four categories: Wi-Fi Network, Social Media, Interactive Public Display and Smartphone Application in Public Space, but this paper only focuses on social media role, which has recently dominantly influenced the behavior of community in urban areas. Social Media can be defined as "Service which enables to share various news, information, and opinion in ways of multimedia" [25].

The content is often a media content like photographs or videos which by commenting it enables discussion [24]. For South East Asia region, for example, wearesocial.com in 2017 [26] notes “Mobile social media continues to grow with the number of monthly active users accessing social platforms up 34% year-on-year”. Brenner and Duggan [27] state that the number of social media users in an urban area is significant. To explain the effect of social media on the concept of place, this paper refers to two pieces of paper that have discussed this topic, namely the papers by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier [28] and Humphreys [29].

2.2.1. Online Video Shared and the Concept of Mediatization. Currently, images, videos, and movies available in the virtual world can provide a variety of messages, as well as serve as a mediator in the experience of traveling. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier [28] studied the role of online shared videos applications that are used as the mediator of travel experiences, by using the analysis method on the videos published online by tourists visiting a tourism site. The data collected in this study followed a purposive sampling process to select all videos containing tourism activities in New York City, a major tourist destination in the United States.

In their analysis, Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier [28] explained that the video shared application offers the possibility for viewers to have a travel experience as described by the tourists in the videos. When a video is available for viewing, there is a communication and an interaction between the sharing party and the viewers through the threaded comments. Viewers enjoy how they interact with the person or object in the setting that is actually an unfamiliar place to the viewers. Other fun viewers get from watching the video is the viewers’ imagination as they put themselves as the actors and conduct tourism activities guided by the illusion of spatiotemporal narrative illusion offered in the video. In the narrative, the video maker shares various information related to a trip rich in personal opinion or perception of a place.

The perception from imaginative access provided by social media could increase interaction between users and urban setting as a place. That is why Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier [28] found that after watching an online video, most viewers are planning to visit the city of New York. This condition is driven by a process called by Escalas [30] as “narrative transportation”, which is a concept of virtual mobility in which viewers feel taken mentally to a place. In other words, the experience of tourists in a technologically mediated place has succeeded in creating the mental pleasure of the living fantasy, the self-interpreted result of virtual mobility itself.

According to Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier [28], the experience in the built environment is often mediated by information technology that reshapes and changes the interpretation of a place to allow for mediatization. The concept of mediatization, according to Jansson [31], occurs when the globalized media culture allows people to travel mentally and emotionally (one of them is experiencing tourism activity) without moving in physical geography

2.2.2. Mobile Social Network and the Concept of Parochial. Humphreys [29] discussed the case study on the use of mobile social network called Dodgeball as well as its relation to spatial practices in urban areas. Spatial practices refer to the everyday lived experience of and movement through social and physical space [32]. Dodgeball is a service, owned by Google and based in New York City, which allows users to let personal networks of friends know where they are via their mobile phones [29]. This service facilitates the exchange of location information among its users to encourage face-to-face interaction. In his research, Humphreys [29] believed that the increasing use of mobile social networks will affect and even change the way people gather and interact in the public space (refers to non-domestic spaces such as dance clubs, parks, restaurants, bars, cafes, the street, and so on).

Humphreys [29] explained that: “Mobile social networks can help to turn public realms into parochial realms through parochialization”. According to him, parochialization can be defined as the process of creating, sharing and exchanging information, social and locational, to contribute to a sense of commonality among a group of people in public space. In urban social space, parochial is the space between the private and public spaces. Parochial spaces are territories characterized by “a sense of

commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within communities” [33]. The use of Dodgeball has, in fact, turned public space into parochial space, foreign but familiar (a sense of familiarity) because of the information shared about that public space encouraging users to conduct activities in the public space.

In conclusion, Humphreys [29] stated that social networks allow new types of information to flow into public spaces, changing the way people gather and interact in public spaces, resulting in a rearrangement of social and spatial practices. The advancement of new communication technology may have changed the spatial and temporal boundaries, but the location and socio-spatial factors still actually form communication even through the media.

3. Discussion: Sense of Place, Urban Heritage Area, and Social Media

Litvin [34] stated that the historic area is a combination of places that have heritage values. Smith [35] also believed that the ‘effect’ of place helps us to understand the meaning of heritage site and wrote: “Heritage as a place, or heritage places, may not only be conceived as representational of past human experiences but also of creating an effect on current experiences and perceptions of the world. Thus, a heritage place may represent or stand in for a sense of identity and belonging to particular individuals or groups”. Similar to that, Davis et al [36] said that whether we refer to such places as heritage sites; there are undoubtedly historic, contemporary, natural and cultural features in the landscape that hold special meaning that contributes to the creation of a sense of place.

Heritage areas indeed have a close relationship with the presence of a sense of place because these areas contribute greatly in creating a sense of place in urban areas, which is one of the important factors for shaping urban identity. In addition, to create an identity, sense of place is also one of the quality indicators of cities with historical values. Montgomery [37] stated that one of the lists of urban qualities that community value for a historic city is a sense of place. In support of this, Orbasli [5] stated that: “Historic areas remain familiar in a changing environment and provide a sense of place”.

What is a sense of place? The sense of place is a concept that explains the relationship between man and place. The sense of place begins with a sensation received by a person from a physical environment where man interacts, an impression that later would be perceived and to create a subjective meaning of the place. The sense of place is a thorough concept where a man could sense a place, create a perception and connect to the meaningful place [38]. Although Robertson [39] believed the sense of place has the role to make people stay longer, there is no exact measurement on a sense of place concept because it is highly dependent on cognitive aspect and subjective perception. Therefore Stokowski [40] argued that the sense of place concept would remain in change, adaptable and unique for each place.

In the conservation context, the understanding of the sense of place could be started from the idea of who owns the sense of place. As Canter [41] mentioned, if we are to understand peoples’ responses to places and their actions within them, it is necessary to understand what (and how) they think. Therefore, the question to discuss is: Who is the true owner of a sense of place in urban heritage areas within the existing academic studies? Does the change of behavior of urban community in looking at places, due to the influence of social media previously described through the Concept of Mediatization and the Concept of Parochial, influence the ownership of the sense of place in urban heritage areas? Then, what are the impacts on the conservation of urban heritage areas?

3.1. Whose Sense of Place?

Based on the debates on the owner of a sense of place in the academic literature, this paper classifies two groups that potentially have a sense of place: the local community and visitors or tourists. The local community is seen to be the group that has the highest potential to own a sense of place because there is awareness that the sense of place comes after a sense of belonging (see [42]) or social insideness due to familiarity with both the community and the landscape (see [43]). That explains why a sense of place is often related to duration of staying. Ching et al. [44] also found that the local residents (owners and building tenants of heritage shophouses) in Armenian Street George Town Penang Malaysia are willing to spend money for renovation because they have a sense of belonging and social insideness due to

the familiarity with the environment where they live. In line with that, Davies et al. [45] believed that adults who live in areas of higher concentrations of the historic environment and young people who are interested in the historic environment are more likely to have a stronger Sense of Place.

It is interesting when an emerging opinion stating that sense of place is not always owned by the local community. In their study in Taiwan, Davis et al. [36] found that local community even has the potential to have no sense of place. The attention given by the local community to an area is minimal because the environment is considered as something regular and routinely seen. They wrote: “Although they are local people, frankly speaking, their understanding of Hsin-hua is limited to the town centre. They have never paid much attention to other parts, even when they walk past; they have never paid any attention”. In that case, is there any other party who has more sense of place than the locals? The question has brought us to the second group, the tourists.

Currently, heritage areas have become one of heritage tourism destinations in urban areas due to the changing trend in the world of tourism today, which according to Cahyadi and Gunawijaya [46], occurs because of the desire of tourists to see different cultures, view local attractions, buy locally produced goods, meet with local communities, and attend local events. Therefore, Jakle in [6] believed that the most appropriate party to have a sense of place is the tourists and not those living in these places as tourists do have the intention to deliberately come to a place and seek the experience offered by that place.

Mediating it, Kianicka et al. [47] stated based on their research that sense of place may actually be owned by locals and tourists, but the form of their sense of place is different because the meaning and significance of those places are captured differently by both parties. They found that the sense of place owned by the local population related to their everyday life such as work, property, and social ties, is also linked to memories of childhood and adolescence. Different from the locals, the sense of place owned by tourists is formed from the aesthetics and characteristics factor of a place when they get the experience of a recreational activity carried out at the place. Tourists have an “outsider’s” view and therefore may perceive and value landscapes differently (Stremlow in [47]).

Based on the above explanation, this paper believes that sense of place does not only belong to the local community but also belong to tourist. Tourists have the possibility to have a sense of place and to partake in heritage conservation program. However, the role of tourists that involve in the heritage area activities has not been well studied. The limited study on the tourists’ sense of study is probably due to the idea that tourists, before coming to the place, have only idea of what the place is, so the opportunity to create a sense of place is very limited. The chance that they develop a sense of place is limited and the chance that this affects their identity is even smaller [48]. In many instances, tourists are seen as the enemies of heritage conservation – their presence will not only enhance wear and tear of the sites, but also change the aura of the heritage site [49].

3.2. What is the Effect of Social Media on Sense of Place?

In postmodern thought, a place has the potential to have a shift in meaning due to the advances in information and communication technology. When the meaning of the place has shifted, then this paper believes that it should influence the creation of a sense of place. Although there have been many new concepts discussing places as the result of the effect of information and communication technology advances, there are only a few that review the influence of social media on the existence of a sense of place, when the heritage areas become heritage tourism destination.

According to Relph [43], sense of place is the result of man’s interaction with (1) Physical setting; (2) Activity; and (3) Meaning and the ability to give identity to the place. Montgomery in [13] constructs the three components of sense of place in the context of urban design by explaining (1) physical setting as Form (such as: scale, intensity, permeability, landmarks, and space to building ratio, etc); (2) Activity (such as: street life, café culture, events and local traditions, etc); and (3) Meaning as Image (such as: symbolism and memory, imageable and legability, sensory experience and associations, and knowledgeability, etc) as result of cognition, perception, and information. In regard to the sense of place component, Carmona et al [12] state that conception of each place will have variation from the Relph’s

components. It is possible that in a certain place, the physical setting proportion is bigger than other components and in other place, activity and meaning have bigger scores in creating the sense of place.

The experience is one of the determining factors of Meaning, a component to create a sense of place. When a person interacts with a place and receives a sensory experience, the person has the potential to get the meaning of a place (see [50] and [12]), but because of the concept of mediatization in the social media era, that experience could be accessible without direct interaction. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier [29] stated that this social media has succeeded in engaging viewers at a certain level, hence the viewers manage to produce an enjoyable experience of a place imaginatively. Currently, social media can function as a means of 'transportation' to a place and provide imaginative access, based on the viewers' perceptions of the place.

The experience factor has now become something interesting to review in the era of social media when it turns out that experience does not have to be obtained directly through physical sensation of a place and is built on someone else's personal reflexive consideration. This needs to be revisited because the current paradigm believes experience can only be gained physical sensation from direct interaction with a place. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier [29] wrote: "Sharing digital reviews broadens the access to experiences of 'touristhood' so that tourists do not only see their travel experiences in contrast to their own day to day activities, but also in many different contexts based on other travelers' experiences".

The trends show that one person's shared experience becomes another person's inspiration for dreaming and the cycle begins all over again [51]. Even so, the indirect experience gained is not necessarily accepted by the viewers, it first goes through a process of observational learning. To generate the perception of an experience, and individual does not automatically mimic (mechanically) after observation but use the consideration based on their previous experience, morality, perspective or thought (Bandura in [52])

Graham [53] stated that the existence of physical setting in a place is manifesting through their presence in both material spaces and electronic spaces. Cresswell [50] also explained how individuals can gather a sense of place from filmic representations of a place. Therefore, experience, though indirect, which tends to encourage viewers to interact directly in a place ultimately potentially creates a strong sense of place as they become tourists in the place.

Another concept, the Concept of Parochial, has given a new perspective in seeing how humans interact in the public space due to the influence of social media. The development and proliferation of mobile social networks have the potential to transform ways that people come together and interact in public space [29]. The use of social media has successfully transformed public space into a space that is *Parochial*, foreign but familiar, so eventually, it is able to encourage the users to have activities in public spaces. Information and communication are two essential factors of interest and attraction specific to urban environments [24]. Digital technologies have changed the way we inform, entertain and educate ourselves, as well as our ways of working, carrying out research, doing business, and keeping in contact with each other [54].

So, what is the impact of the sense of familiarity to a sense of place? The familiarity and insideness can form Meaning, which is one condition to create a sense of place. Many people believe that the familiarity sense can only be owned by the local as result of the duration of staying (see [43]). As a matter of fact, when parochial rooms are created, the outsider also has the opportunity to experience the insideness factor. When the shifting process of the perspective of place due to the influence of social media is experienced by the tourists before visiting urban heritage areas, this paper argues that the tourists have the potential to have a strong sense of place when interacting directly with the heritage areas. At some level, a sense of place has the potential to no longer be acquired by just spending time at a place, such as by staying in it, because currently, people can live in one place but do most of their social activities in another place. They can be physically 'here' while the environment they are building up the familiarity with is out 'there' or brought in here through the digital screen (Toft in [29]).

Other than providing an indirect sense of familiarity, social media also provides an arena for visitors to do interpretation in the heritage area. Interpretation is an important factor in meaning that creates a

sense of place. Supporting this, Ponting and McDonald [55] stated that media-driven repertoires of images and narratives not only form the basis of tourist attractions but also implicitly influence the interpretation of sites and cultures and the ways in which they are experienced, recorded and communicated by tourists. Social media has made heritage area as an area that not only has historical value, but also can be interpreted with own understanding, by both the local community and the visitors.

In the end, this paper argues that social media has the potential to (1) create experience factor (in the Activity component) without the necessity to do direct interaction; (2) produce familiar factors (in the Meaning component) without having long duration in a place; and (3) help to make an interpretation (which produces the Meaning component) without having directly interaction with the place. So, when social media is successfully helping to create a sense of place components, social media has actually the potential to be the catalyst of a strong sense of place when the visitors visit the area.

3.3. What Is the Impact on Urban Heritage Area Conservation?

Urban heritage conservation is significantly different from building conservation because area conservation tends to be more complex, involving various aspects such as socio-economic aspect and the impacts on the local community. Orbasli [5] states that one different factor between the two is urban heritage conservation needs to have a social dimension and involves all users. An inhabitant, property owner, business and other people involved in the area are part of the conservation process [5]. Therefore, the description of the sense of place of the stakeholders, particularly the presence of tourists who have a strong relationship with social media, is to be reckoned with in the conservation planning. The existence of this sense of place will provide an opportunity to explore the social and cultural processes that affect the environment and landscape assessments, including the opinions and judgments of the community in landscape planning policy widely [56].

The role as visitors, as an element that has strong potential to own a strong sense of place, must also be considered as a stakeholder in the urban heritage conservation program. This is against the thinking of tourist as a cause of negative externalities in the urban heritage area. Although tourists often cause heritage sites to become commodities, reviews show that they are also concerned with conservation; tourists are thus not "enemies" of heritage [49].

Other than bringing up the role of visitors, social media has also raised the issue of heritage to the cyberspace. A virtual community evolves as different people recall and interpret their heritage experiences and the construction of heritage has now extended into cyberspace [49]. This has helped the establishment of many communities in the cyberspace that share interest and concern on heritage area. The cyberspace-based community is also important to be considered as a stakeholder in the conservation effort.

In the context of public space, due to the importance of the use of digital networks in everyday life, Abdel-Aziz et al.[24] believed that the addition of a digital layer to an existing urban landscape is needed, enabling the experience of an urban environment accessible through direct contact or through the mediation of digital technology. There is a redefinition of public space that has a physical layer and a digital layer in it. This condition is called as the new social public place.

Can this "new social public place" be accommodated in the heritage areas? This paper believes that place-making efforts for the public space of urban heritage areas that have the concept of "the new social public place" are interesting ideas and can be one of the programs in conservation efforts. This idea is contrary to the opinion stating that communication and information technology will encourage individualistic characteristics. Abdel-Aziz et al. [24] actually also believed that the new social public place will make a new public space that can invite individuals to interact. The existence of the digital layer along with the physical layer will further encourage the existence of heritage areas in cyberspace, especially in the flow of information and communication in social media.

4. Conclusion

The spaces will turn into places at the point where the setting's physical and cultural characteristics meld with the individual's affective perceptions and functional needs [9]. Therefore, Malpas [57] believed that

regardless of time, history, geographical situation, technology, even social condition, humans will always need a place because owning and identifying places are integrated with human identity. The place is a space that is given meaning by the users, so the concept of place is physical as well as psychological. The concept of place, with all its complexity and debates within it, is a well-received theoretical construction in the spatial field of study, thus a sense of place is the most commonly used concept in understanding a place because it can describe the relationship between spatial setting and humans that conduct activities in it.

Escobar [58] emphasizes the dichotomy of place between place as a conceptualization of identity, our mental image or ‘category of thought’ about a locality; and place as a physical entity, ‘a constructed reality’. When a place becomes a physical reality constructed through social media, then social media can reduce or even increase the construction. The shift of place perspective due to social media is explained through the Concept of Mediatization (see [28]) and the Concept of Parochial (see [29]).

The Concept of Mediatization explains how someone’s direct experience in a place can be mediated by social media, re-shaped until it can change the interpretation of viewers of that place. The factor of experience, which was originally a direct result of physical sensation, can now be owned based on indirect experience, namely in the form of cognitive knowledge on the direct experience of the place shared in social media. The Concept of Parochial also describes the shift of construction of place when social media has succeeded in causing a person to have a sense of familiarity towards a place that is still foreign. Other than that, social media has also given chances for the person to do own interpretation with own interpretations of heritage objects.

This paper argues that in urban heritage context, social media has the potential to be a catalyst in creating a strong “sense of place” at the time a person visits the heritage area. Social media is playing an increasing role in shaping travelers’ expectations, and thus in shaping their heritage experiences [49]. Therefore, heritage conservation planning must give a space to the digital dimension, which has been part of modern lifestyle. In the context of urban heritage conservation, the sense of place factor is an important knowledge because it would change the stakeholder mapping. Tourist and heritage communities in the cyberspace play important role in the conservation thus they can be considered as a stakeholder.

As social media has impacted people’s way of viewing a place, this paper believes the meaning of place in heritage area needs to be revisited. As a matter of fact, in an urban heritage conservation context, place concept must also include the dynamics of the people. As explained by Rapoport [59], the meaning of built environment is strongly influenced by the popular culture. The objective of this review is not only to neglect but also to enrich the understanding of urban heritage conservation for tourism. Therefore, the argument that the postmodern community, through technological and cultural corrections, can now ignore place, must be questioned existentially. From this point of view, the argument that the postmodern society, through technological and cultural correctives, can now ignore place is questionable existentially and potentially devastating practically, whether in terms of policy, design, or in terms of popular understanding [60].

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