

Psychology in Architecture

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18 / 03 / 2025

Place Identity vs. Place Attachment

- Different concepts
- Same thing
- Place Attachment component of Place Identity
- Place Identity component of Place Attachment
- Both Place Attachment and Place Identity components of another concept

What is Place Identity?

- a component of self-identity (Proshansky et al., 1983) and “a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place” (Hernandez et al., 2007)
- a substructure of the social identity of the self, consisting of aspects of self-concepts that are based on the idea of belonging to geographically defined groups (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2013)
- based on the understanding that a person’s self-image and values are often influenced by their relationship with the physical environment they inhabit (Proshansky et al., 1983; Manzo and Perkins, 2006)

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- incorporation of place into concept of self
- place related identification - **can't have an identity without a place?**



**Place-based social
identity**

X

Identity of a place

What is Place?

- is a meaningful location (Creswell, 2015): physical existence + attributed meaning
- has a location (where), a locale (physical properties), sense of place (how experienced; Agnew, 1987)
- is a conjunction of physical properties (*location & locale*), activities/goals, conceptualizations (*sense of place*; Canter, 1977)
- is formed by physical environment, human behaviours, social and/or psychological processes (Stedman, 2003)

The concept of place

a definition

- The concept of “place” has a long history in architecture and in architectural psychology (in which environmental psychology is rooted)
- The concept “place” defines the environment as highly *person-dependent*, and emphasizes the *meaning that environments have* for specific individuals and how they *experience* them (e.g., Canter, 1977, 1989)
- The concept of place is often seen as an enrichment of the Behavior Setting concept; The environment not just consisting of “*behavior shaping forces*” but as the “*material and symbolic product of human action*” (Stokols & Shumacher, 1981)

The concept of place

A home for sale?



It is possible to buy a house.
But is it possible to buy a home?

A House is not a Home!

Definitions

- A residence is a physical structure designated for living in (house or apartment)
- A home is a residential environment to which one is emotionally attached
"home is where the heart is"

Being Home

And urban renewal

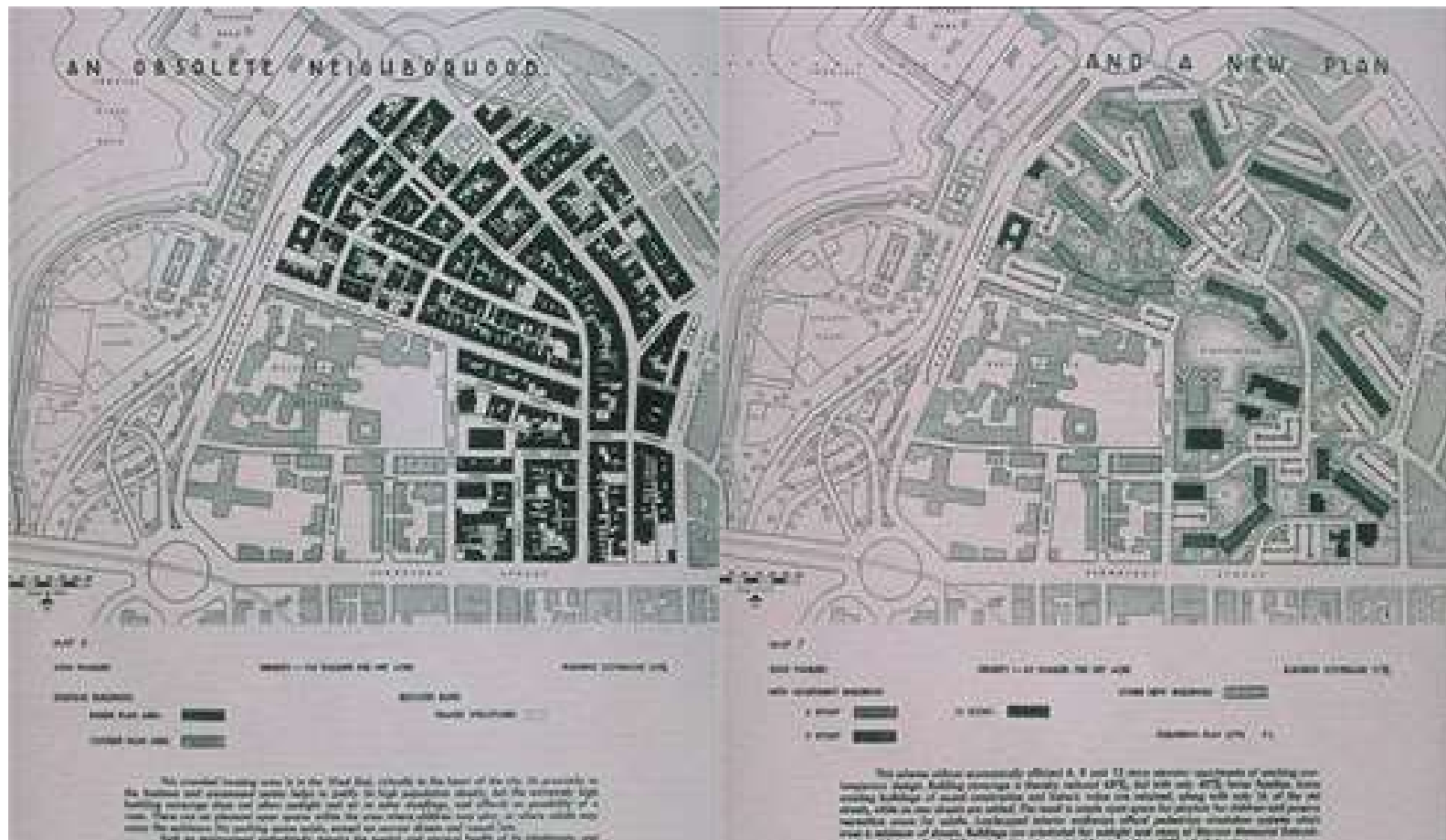
Fried, M., & Gleicher, P. (1961). Some sources of residential satisfaction in an urban slum. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 27, 305-315.

- It has been argued that social pathologies (e.g., delinquency, prostitution, alcoholism) in urban slums will disappear with urban renewal (a case of **architectural determinism**)
- However "urban slums" provide **a home** to many people, despite the lack of quality of the physical environment
- Fried & Gleicher investigated "being home" in Boston's West End before urban renewal in 1959



Being Home

Urban renewal in Boston's West End



Being Home

Urban renewal in Boston's West End



Being Home... ...in Boston's West End

TABLE 2
FEELINGS ABOUT THE WEST END

Feelings	Number	Per cent
Totals	473	100
Like very well	174	37}
Like	183	38} 75
Mixed like-dislike	47	10}
Indifferent	18	4} 14
Dislike	25	5}
Dislike very much	23	5} 10
No answer	3	1

High residential satisfaction in West End
Even for recent residents (moved in after 1950)

A Home

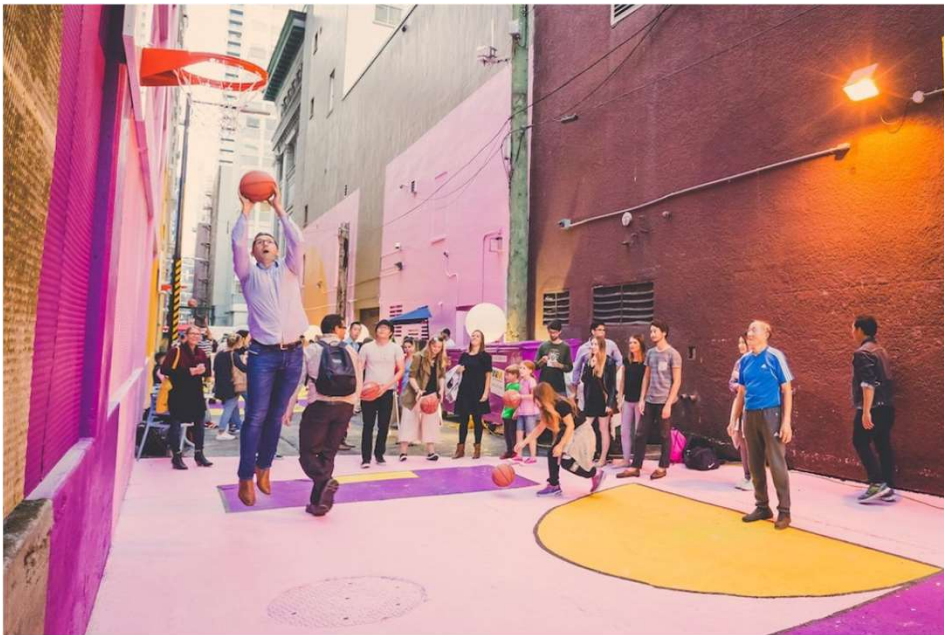
What does it mean?

- The survey by Fried & Gleicher revealed what it means for a residential environment to be a home
- Home means **connectedness**
 - Feeling affiliated with people (neighbors, or family), the place (neighborhood), the past (memories), and the future
 - Home means a **sense of kinship** or ethnic belonging
- Home means **identity**
 - Identity is shaped by residential environment
 - We transform a house to portray our identity
- Home means there are strong bonds with the residential environment

What is Place?

- Places are spaces to which meaning, feeling and/or emotional attachment have been given.
- Changing a space to place is the existential purpose of architecture (Norberg-Schulz, 1985).
- Genius loci / Atmosphere

Placemaking / Social Sustainability



What is Place Attachment?

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- a positive, affective bond between an individual and a specific place, the main characteristic of which is to maintain closeness to such a place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001)
- it can be expressed as a strong feeling of being at home and a reluctance to leave the place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001)
- the affective bond that people can establish with some places, where they feel content and secure. (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012)
- love of a place (topophilia; Tuan, 1974)

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- love of a place (topophilia; Tuan, 1974)
- state of distress upon separation or remoteness from a place (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993)

Place attachment

Why is attachment to place functional?

Scannell & Gifford (2017). The experienced psychological benefits of place attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 51, 256-269.

- Questions:
 - Why is attachment to place important? What is its purpose?
 - Does attachment to different types of environments have different purposes?
- Method: Survey analyzed with content / thematic analysis

Place attachment

To what environments do we attach?

Scannell & Gifford (2017). The experienced psychological benefits of place attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 51, 256-269.

- People reported attachment to environments of different geographical scales, mostly:
 - “Environmental space”; mostly houses, parks, small wilderness areas, and recreational houses (“cottage”)
 - “Geographic space”; mostly cities, towns, country
- In contrast people reported to attach less to
 - Smaller scale spaces including “maniputable” and “non-maniputable spaces” but some mentioned an office desk, or specific room in the home.
 - “panoramic spaces”; i.e., viewpoints
 - “map spaces”; i.e., large scale spaces only represented in symbols
- This seems to suggest that both a certain scale and movement in / interaction with an environment is needed for attachment to occur

Place attachment

Some important benefits

Scannell & Gifford (2017). The experienced psychological benefits of place attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 51, 256-269.

- Place attachment supports memory storage and retrieval
- This was experienced as a benefit of attachment to different types and scales of environments:
 - House
 - Recreational house
 - Small scale outdoor areas
 - City / Town

Place attachment

Some important benefits

Scannell & Gifford (2017). The experienced psychological benefits of place attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 51, 256-269.

- Place attachment supports a sense of belonging to others
- This was experienced as a benefit of attachment to different types and scales of environments:
 - House
 - Recreational house
 - City / Town

Place attachment

Some important benefits

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- Place attachment supports stress relief and relaxation
- This was experienced as a benefit of attachment to different types and scales of environments:
 - Small scale outdoor areas
 - Recreational house

Place attachment

Some important benefits

Scannell & Gifford (2017). The experienced psychological benefits of place attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 51, 256-269.

- Place attachment supports psychological comfort and security
- This was experienced as a benefit of attachment to the home; often one's own home, but also the homes of friends and family was mentioned

Place attachment

Why is attachment to place functional?

Scannell & Gifford (2017). The experienced psychological benefits of place attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 51, 256-269.

- This is interesting work as it makes us think of place attachment, not as an end in and off itself, but as a mechanism behind well-being
- Several limitations to this study:
 - Can we infer the purpose of place attachment from people's reports about what they experience is beneficial?
 - Does it really make a distinction between antecedents (i.e., what makes us become attached to a place) and consequences (i.e., what does one gain when being attached to a place: Do positive emotions contribute to or are a consequence of attachment?)
- Question that remain:
 - If place attachment is a mechanism, then we should explain *how* it helps in memory storage and retrieval, and in stress relieve
 - Could it be that place attachment reflects a *preference* in aid of staying or going to those environments that are good for well-being (see Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989)

Place Attachment summary

- **Place attachment** is the affective and / or symbolic bond between an individual and a specific place and/or the people living in that place
- Research on place attachment typically focuses on:
 - **Understanding what place attachment is, and how it can be measured (including possible sub-dimensions of the concept: sense of belonging, place identity, etcetera).**
 - Understanding how place attachments affect such things as pro-environmental behavior, the effectiveness of behavior change programs, or the resistance to such technologies as wind turbines
 - Understanding how place experiences and / or attachment develops. Mostly transactional research studying how relationships between people and places (and their meaning) develop over time through episodes (events) such as rituals (home warming party) or the daily rhythms of living.
 - Rare is research focusing on the possible positive (or negative) consequences of place attachment; i.e., what is (dis)functional about developing strong ties with a place?

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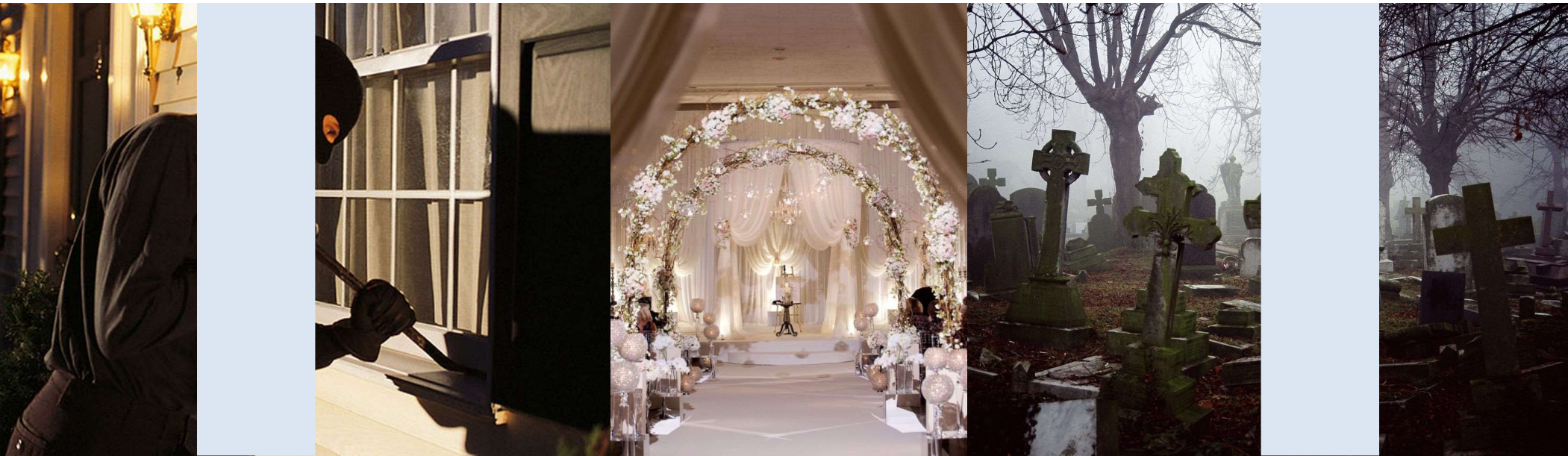
Place concepts applied

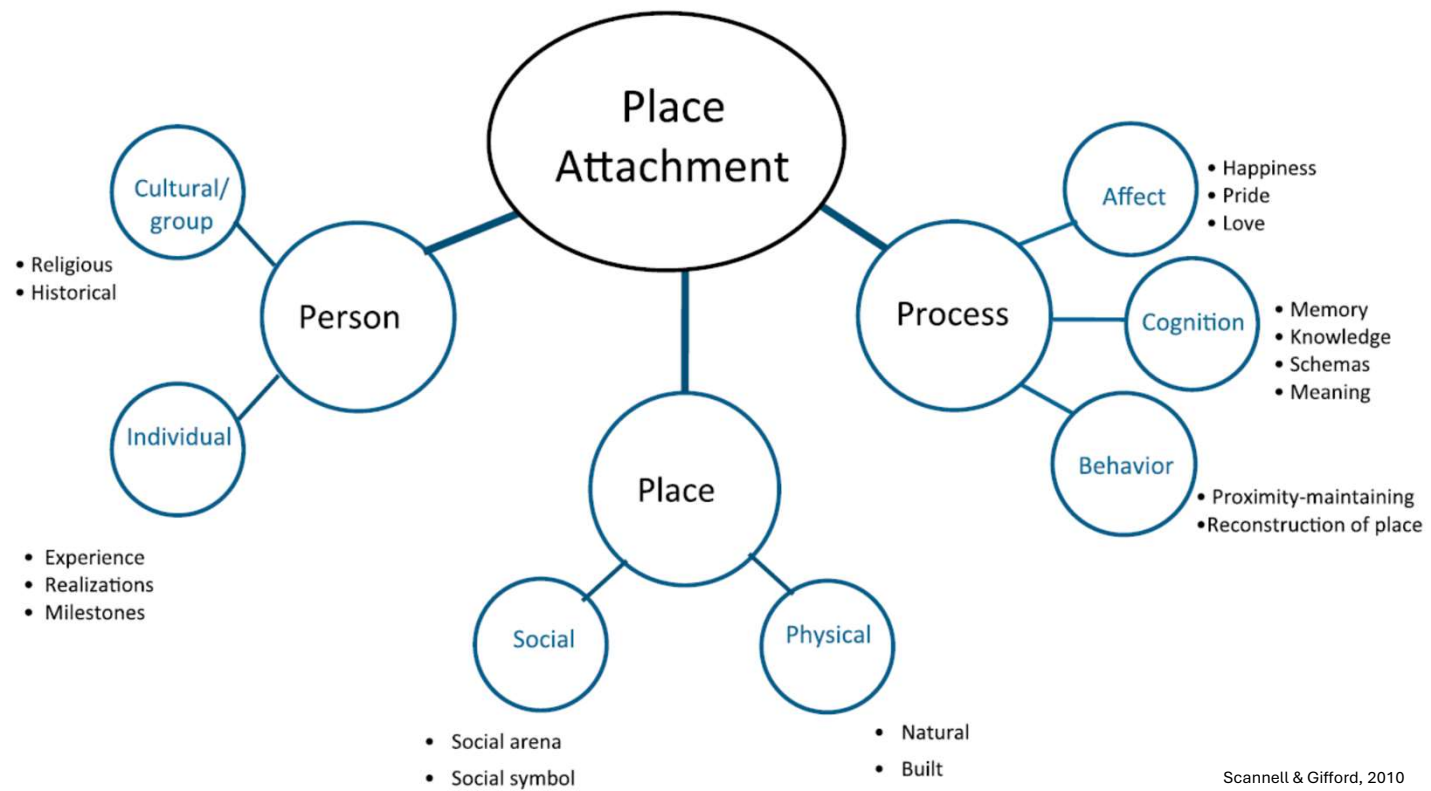


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Place concepts applied





Scannell & Gifford, 2010

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**Place Identity
vs.
Place Attachment?**



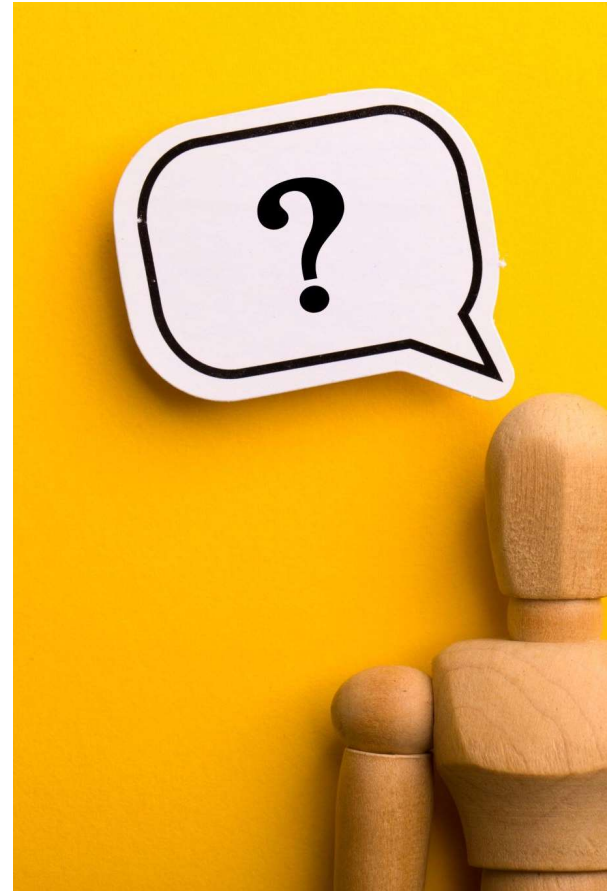
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The background of the slide features a repeating pattern of question marks inside speech bubbles. The bubbles are in various shades of light blue, grey, and off-white, creating a textured, layered effect. The text "Place related questions" is centered over this pattern.

Place related questions

**Intrinsic
vs.
People-given meaning?**



Intrinsic or people-given meaning?

- Intrinsic (Seamon, Norberg-Schulz): Place do or don't have

Intrinsic or people-given meaning?

- Intrinsic (Seamon, Norberg-Schulz): Place do or don't have
- People-given: Feeling or perception held by people
 - Canter (1977) -> goals (related to roles) shape interactions with environment
 - environmental role: aspect of a person's role which is related to their dealing with their physical environment

Brain response to personal places

A quick summary...

Gatersleben,
Et al. (2020).
*Landscape
and Urban
Planning*, 197.

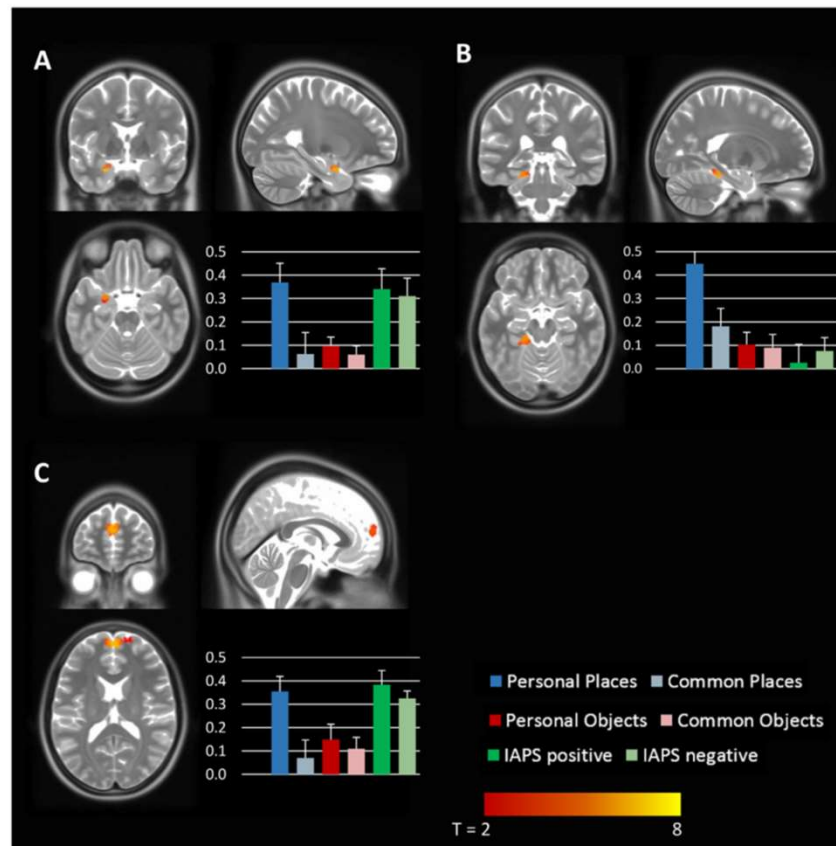
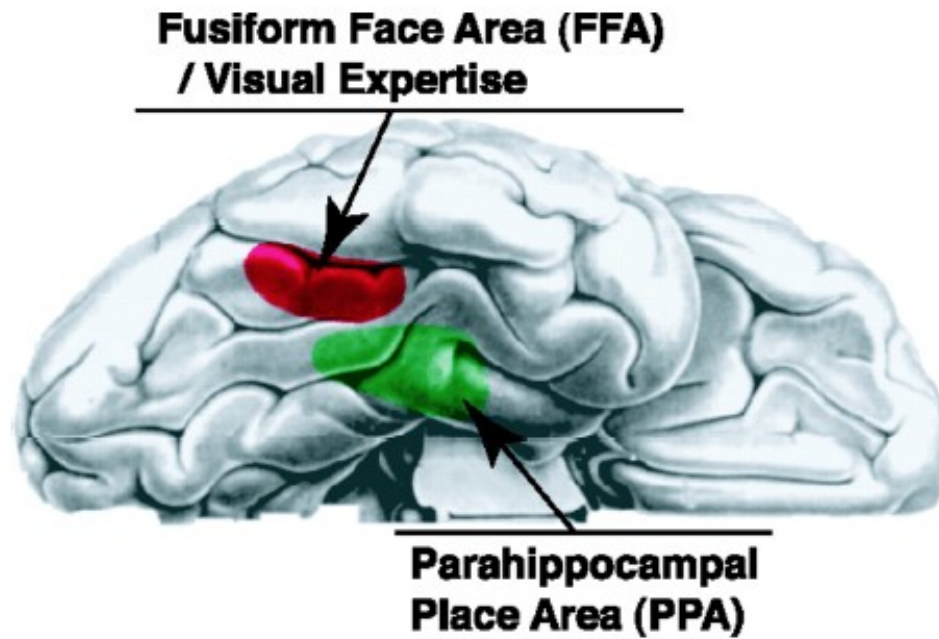
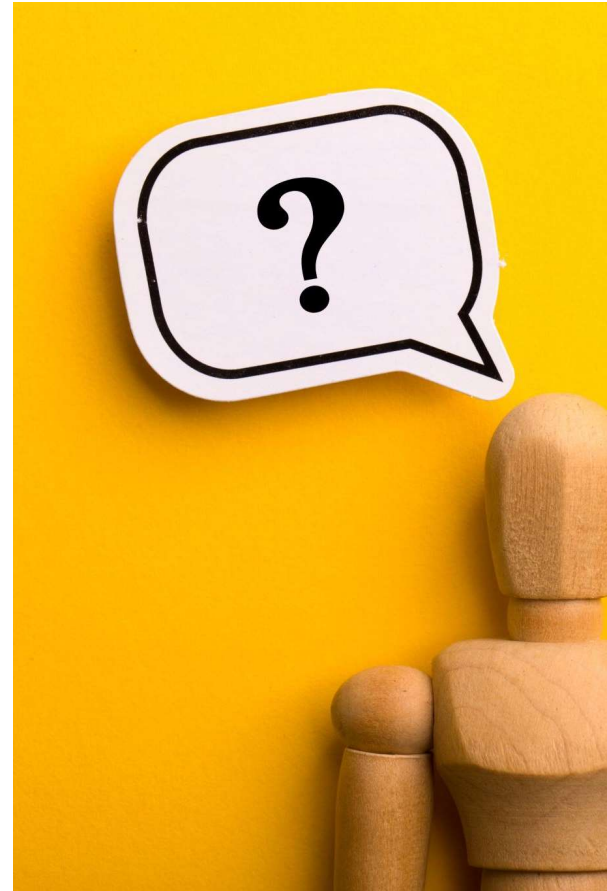


Fig. 2. Brain Activity (% Signal Change) in the Amygdala (A), the Parahippocampal Place Area (B) and the Medial Frontal Cortex (C). Bar graphs represent the percent signal change in each of the activated areas in response to each of the six image types separately.

Parahippocampal Place Area



**Places without
meaning?**



Placelessness

- devoid of meaning, no sense of place (Relph, 1976)
- alienation, lack of quality, feeling of anonymity

Placelessness

- devoid of meaning, no sense of place (Relph, 1976)
- alienation, lack of quality, feeling of anonymity
 - characteristics that define place via Canter's (1977) approach?

Placelessness

- the physical characteristics of nonplaces, which are culturally unidentifiable environments that are similar anywhere
- when places cannot be culturally recognized, they suffer from lacking a sense of place

18.3. – Emotion: Place Attachment

Place attachment, given its benefits, needs to be endorsed by environmental design.

MUST: Scannell & Gifford (2010) + Scannell & Gifford (2017)

AND CHOOSE ONE FROM: Devine-Wright (2009) / Shemesh et al. (2016)

BONUS ONES: Bornioli et al. (2018) / Weinreb & Rofe (2013)